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The Silent Hunter; OR, The Scowl Hall Mystery.

BY PERCY B. ST. JOHN.

CHAPTER I.

CUSTALOGA THE WYANDOT.

AN old owl that had been blinking and staring, during its sleepy watch, in the deep hollow of an ancient beech, in company with a rare brood of horned young—little goblins of the woods—was beginning to wake up and prepare for its night's adventures, the more readily that for some time its peace had been disturbed by the noise of certain daring birds of day, which, as evening drew in, came near and began to settle down on some of the topmost boughs, there to roost for the night. A jay, a twittering blue-bird, and several noisy cawing crows, had waked the owl, which peered out with its great goggle eyes, as if to be quite sure that it was night and a goodly time for owls to wander.

The beech stood on the very edge of a small open space, almost circular, and about twenty yards in length and breadth, beneath the leafy and magnificent arches of a virgin forest, not many miles from the Scioto and Ohio rivers. In the days of which we speak there were tangled thickets, and spreading trees, and Indian tracks, and the lairs of panthers and wolves, where now are cities; there were Indian wigwams where the plow now passes; and there were battles and skirmishes where fair ladies now ramble on foot, or on Narragansett steeds, in perfect safety.

And yet it was to a certain extent inhabited, though the log-huts, plantations and block-houses were situated at a considerable distance from each other.

The night had hardly set in, the owl had scarcely taken its departure, the wind had but just ceased its lullaby to the wearied universe, when out burst upon the blue heavens the bright effulgence of the moon and of her tiny twinkling handmaids the stars, shedding over the whole scene a beauty and a radiance, a devotional calm and a loveliness, which are beheld nowhere but in those choice bowers where nature sets up her temple amid flowers and green leaves, and where the crumbling bark and pith of ages fall unheeded to decay upon the richly fertile soil, enriched in turn by the falling leaves, the aged tree, the too-ripe acorn, and the triangular beech-nut.

The open glade, which some sudden whirl of wind had swept of its leaves, was now by the light of the moon made clearly visible to the eye, and a little bubbling spring was distinguished bursting up in its midst, which, falling away to the south, was lost beneath the leaves that had been piled up like a mimic snow-drift in the corner.

This was the Blue Spring, the source of which, a little further on, was a small stream, flowing beneath a long and matted arch of overhanging trees all the way through the forest, until it fell into the Scioto and was utterly lost, or so commingled with its more huge associate as no longer to be distinguished.

And what is this that comes with stealthy step and slow, gliding like the ghost of the old dwellers in the wilderness, behind the ancient beech-tree?

It is a human shape, or something that has assumed one of the wilder and more terrible forms of humanity, which, without a sound, without noise of footfall, without step as it were, comes floating over the surface of the earth, peering cautiously through the trees, hearkening for the humming—one would think—of the glow-worm, if human ear could detect such sound, and fearing an enemy behind every tree, a hostile savage under every projecting, leafy bough. At last, as if satisfied that there was no danger, the mysterious stranger advanced into the open glade, keeping, however, still within the deep shadows of the trees.

Had there been any eye to see and take in all the wondrous effect of that scene, it would indeed have been struck by the place and the man in no common way.

It was a tall Indian, in his war-paint; and as the moon fell for an instant on his face, it might have been seen that he was far more handsome than those red and untutored savages usually are. It was a stern face, as far as such a thing can be in one with certainly not more than twenty summers on his head; but mouth, eyes, nose, chin, all combined to make him as comely and majestic a specimen of God's greatest handiwork as is often found, even amid the luxuriously brought up, those who temper refinement and luxury with hardy exercise and abundant nourishment.

His face, too, appeared under all the painful disadvantages of that Indian painting which the ingenuity of the savage aborigines had devised, to denote not only a man's peculiar tribe, but his mood of mind, his temporary occupation, and the very object with which he prowled through the shadows of the forest, or lurked in the deep and romantic glens of the woody hills.

The warrior who stood in the open glade of the forest wore moccasins, leggings that reached from ankle to waist, from the knee down all hung with fringe, while over his shoulders was cast a kind of blanket-cloak very richly ornamented. Various

trifles hung from a collar over his chest, which was strangely tattooed with a hand clutching a knife, while his head, which was covered with hair, contrary to the usual custom, was adorned by several eagle-plumes.

By his side hung a glittering tomahawk, a long knife whose hideous uses are well known, a shot-pouch and powder-horn; and in his left hand was a rifle, on which he leaned, as he slowly and deliberately took in every feature of the scene. His piercing black eyes seemed to dart into every nook and cranny of the place; his ears were erect, and he evidently listened with all the usual keenness of the child of the woodland hill and plain. At last he seemed satisfied, for he leaned carelessly on his gun and uttered a few faint imitations of the owl's well-known hoot.

Another form glided through the trees along the trail by which the Indian had come, and in two minutes stood by his side.

The new arrival was much shorter than the Indian, and his garb, step, and manner, marked him at once for a white man. He wore high boots instead of moccasins, leggings, a handsome hunting shirt, and a cap of bear-skin, while his weapon was a rifle. On



his back he carried a large knapsack, a novel thing to see strapped to the shoulders of one who appeared on the war-path. He stepped carelessly forward until he stood near the Indian.

"A lovely spot, Custaloga, and one I could sit down and sketch with all my heart," said the white man, gazing with earnest look at the small, open clearing, and the bright heavens that lay an azure sea above the tree-tops.

"My brother loves much to see the forest tree on his book," replied the Indian, in a softer voice than in general belonged to his race; "and his fingers make the paper look like the oak and the beech. Custaloga is a warrior; but when the hatchet is buried, he looks at his white brother and smiles. But it is night, and the wolf prowls in the woods; my brother has a scalp, and he would not like to walk home to the block-house and the White Roses with a bare head."

"You've an uncomfortable way of talking, red-skin," said the other, passing his hand uneasily over his head, as if to be sure his natural covering was all right; "still, if you had not spoken of Amy and Jane, I think I should have squatted down and dashed off that clearing. It's mighty tempting, Eagle-Eye."

"My brother is a great medicine, and he can make a piece of paper look like a leaf, or a bounding deer, or a girl's soft face—but he is very wise, and he will look round in the woods and watch, when Red-Bird and a hundred Shawnee warriors are thirsting for his blood."

The young man, whose sunburnt skin and wild garb did not conceal a pleasant, handsome face, clutched his rifle and looked warily around.

"I'm not a man to be easily skeered, Custa; and that you know. I have hunted, and painted beast, bird, and flower, up and down, within reach of these vagabonds more than once; but the mention of Red-Bird and a hundred of his painted Shawnee imps, is enough to make a man creep about in his shoes as if he were fearful of raising the ghosts of the forest-trees. I say, then, to cover, in the name of heaven. I would not give a chip-muck's tail for both our scalps, if we were circumvented by that noted rascal."

"My brother speaks like a brave. When his enemies come like the falling leaves of the forest, which no man can count, he will hide, that in the morning he may watch for the time when he may fight like a man. Come."

And the Indian left the open glade, turned the oak, after obliterating even the faintest sign of a trail, and entering a thick, short bush that seemed to grow out of the trunk of a huge tree that had fallen three years before, stooped down and concealed himself beneath the dense, overhanging foliage, in all these acts being faithfully followed by his white companion. They did not speak, they hardly appeared to breathe; and the whole scene sunk into the same calm which had so long prevailed.

Custaloga was a young Indian, who, having on account of his youth been much taken notice of by a white family under peculiar circumstances, had repaid their kindness by a single-hearted devotion which was the admiration of the educated and thoughtful, but the scorn of those rude beings who had learned under terrible and ghastly teaching to treat the Indian as a wild beast. Custaloga had been taken prisoner when twelve years old, having been found skulking round a house during a hot contest with the red-men. His captors had kept him for some time a regular prisoner, until mutual confidence being gained, he was allowed to roam about on parole; and had, with a readiness which was singular in a Wyandot, acceded to the wishes of his friends to stay a certain time with them. His bargain had been that he was to hunt, shoot, and roam the forest at will, on condition of his return-

ing at stated periods to Cane-Brake House, as the residence and block-house of Judge William Moss was called.

Strange to say again, Custaloga, called by the Indians Eagle-Eye, had become as obedient as a child in the hands of Amy and Jane Moss, the lovely daughters of the settler—at all events, in many things which were strange and new to his race. He had actually been so far persuaded as to learn to read and write.

The people of the district marveled much, and told the judge he was nursing a serpent that would bite him sorely; but the judge had nothing to say when his good Mary, who had since died, or his dear Amy and Jane, willed a thing.

Still he was often uneasy, and became truly alarmed when Custaloga disappeared for a whole year, and was believed to have entirely departed. He shook his head and hoped no harm would come of it, while Amy and Jane sorely grieved for their lost pet—for one they had begun to look upon with warm friendship, and whom they earnestly believed they had plucked whole from the fire.

One evening they were sitting at their last meal, beneath the shadow of their strong block-house, talking of the affairs of the colony, and of the war waging with certain tribes of the Indians, when a canoe floated up to a little wharf on the river, a single man came on shore, and up glided Custaloga after twelve months' absence, and took his seat at the table as if nothing had happened. He had been hunting, he had been on the war-path with the remnant of his tribe, and had now returned, hoping to be useful to his friends, because there was a talk of a great insurrection of the red-skins of the English party.

Dick Harvey, the Painter of the Woods, his companion on the present occasion, was a young man who, to undaunted courage and an ardent love for the life of the wilds, united a keen relish for art—not for art as studied in the towns of the civilized parts of the world, but art fed by the dew-drops in the morning, by the genial sun during the day, and cradled at night beneath the vast, leafy canopy of nature's woody plains. The young man had now been three years hunting, fishing, and painting on the Ohio and its tributaries. Here he met Custaloga, received a service at his hand, was grateful, and friendship thus kindled had become of a very warm character.

Having now briefly told all that need be known at present of the two men who lay in that dreary ambush, we return to our narrative.

For about half an hour after Custaloga and Harvey had retired beneath the thick and bushy shelter of the mossy skirts of that rare old tree, which enabled them to lie also deep within the general gloom of the forest, not a sound was heard save the whispering of the wind, the rustling of the tree-tops, and the faint rippling of the little stream below.

The silence was, however, broken at the end of that period in a very marked manner. A man came running through the woods for some distance, stamping, crushing boughs beneath his feet, and in every way exhibiting a complete want of caution quite foreign to the habits of a true frequenter of the wilderness, where in those days men scarcely spoke above their breath, or trod but with the terrible caution of a panther, or the peculiar stealth of a tiger-cat.

In a few minutes the noisy intruder stood on the edge of the open glade.

"Golly!" said the stranger, a powerful and middle-aged negro, "golly! Yah! yah! I declare I's out of wind. What de meaning dat big red-skin make de 'pointment yar? Dis child cold. Him hear de ole jay, pick up sticks for de ole man burn de nigga wid. Golly! Dis ugly place, dis dark. Dis child no degree to dis speculation. My! What dat? I tink

I yar de crack ob de whip! No! Same ole 'possum grin at de moon agly an' mal, 'possum—steal de ole hen, suck de egg. Well, what dis nigga down yar for, eh? No laugh—no fun—dis nigga mean blood—yah! yah! yah! Dey tink me in bed—dey berry much misbetaken. Why de young massa hit me, eh? Golly! golly! golly! Don't hurt dis child! Oh! hah!"

"My brother talk like old woman—tell all his secrets—why not silent wait till chief come?"

The negro—who, when struck familiarly on the shoulder by some one who had glided like a shadow to his side, had almost fallen to the ground—now peered cautiously over his raised arm, his knees shaking, and his face exhibiting signs of the most abject terror, which slowly subsided as he recognized an Indian of the Shawnee tribe, nearly naked, painted with all the fantastic horrors which appertained to a warrior on the war-path.

"Golly!" began the negro.

"Hush!" said the savage, walking away and taking up his station within the inside edge of the glade, about four yards from the hiding-place of the Wyandot and the white man. The negro, thus warned, immediately did the same and seated himself alongside the red-skin, who calmly filled his tomahawk-pipe and began to smoke.

Several other red-skins now came gliding in with the same cautious step, until fourteen were collected, all of whom seated themselves in the same way, lit their pipes, and commenced deliberately to smoke. At the same time, and at some distance, two warriors stood erect, each near a tree, having taken up this position to act as scouts while the others deliberated.

A dignified pause ensued, and then up rose a warrior of middle age, in all the paint and panoply of war, covered with medals and silver ornaments, and holding in his hand a short gun, which shone brightly in the moon as he moved it to and fro.

He extended an arm, and pointed to the east, speaking in his own dialect, with which the negro was sufficiently familiar to understand the general drift of the matter.

"Ages ago, from the far-off country under the sun, came the Long-knives, a people of men without hearts, with fiery bows and arrows, and very fond of land. They had a fire-water which was very hot, and which warmed the poor Indian, but made him ill and killed him by-and-by! But the Indian was a fool; he loved the drink of the pale-faces better than his ancient hunting-grounds; he drank Iscadaywabo! and the Sheemook-men, while he was dead with drink, made him sign away his lands. The red-skins, the children of the Manitou, awoke, and they found themselves without land. Well, the forest was large, and they went away and buried themselves within its shadows, leaving a long way between them and the pale-faces. But one morning the white men came crying, more land, and they took it; and they told the red-skins not to hunt, but to hoe the ground like squaws; and some cunning men among the men from under the sun made friends with the red-men and disarmed them. Every day they ask for more, for more land, and they take it."

The speaker stopped, leaned his gun against a tree, rested one hand on his chest, and held the other on high, and then continued:

"Where are my people? The leaves of the forest are red with their blood: there are no beasts for them to hunt; they will soon starve; and the pale-faces will have all. But the red-skin is a man; his heart is the heart of a warrior; his hand is like lightning; his feet like the running stream which leaves no mark; his eye is like the eagle in the clouds—let him dig up the hatchet, let him start on the war-path, let him come down like the whirlwind, and the wigwams will be filled with gladness."

He then, amid an unchecked murmur of applause, explained that a general feeling existed among the Indians to have a simultaneous rising of all the red-men against the odious whites—that an early day would be fixed for the explosion, and that, as a good omen for success, there was present a negro in the service of one of the whites, who was ready to deliver into their hands a fort well supplied with arms and ammunition, and many rich treasures, on the sole condition that, in addition to a fair share of the plunder, he was to have all his own people spared and the white women—the men he gave up to them, one and all.

"Ebberry word true," said the negro, rising as the other ceased; "dis child do it too—him laugh up dah 'toder side de mout'den. Yah! yah! yah!"

With this grim attempt at oratory, the negro sat down.

All the warriors present subscribed to the terms offered by the negro, and then, after some brief arrangements, and after appointing a meeting between Red-Bird and Jonas, the warriors drew their cloaks round them and retired the way they came; and in ten minutes the glade was as silent and abandoned as if it had never been disturbed by the presence of these grim instruments of death in the worst and most fearful form.

Full a quarter of an hour passed before even a rustling was heard in the bushes. Then the Indian cautiously raised his head, peered round into the gloom, listened, peered round again, and then crawled forth like a snake, followed by Dick Harvey.

"Well," said Dick, in a low whisper, "if that ain't as bloody a conspiracy as ever was hatched in half an hour. That horrid nigger—old Spiky Jonas too—won't I kick his shins—the skunk, the pole-cat, the 'possum—I'm up to him now."

"Ugh!" interrupted the Indian, laying his rifle on the hollow of his arm; "Custaloga is hot—his tongue is parched—the words of Red-Bird were like fire—the song-birds of the cane-brake must be saved. Custaloga will drink, and then he will talk with his white brother."

The young Indian advanced into the open glade, stooped, drank a deep draught out of a gourd he carried at his side, and then seating himself, drew forth food, which he handed to Harvey.

"Eat; we shall leave a long trail behind us before morning."

"You intend going up to the block-house first?" asked the painter, anxiously.

"Most danger there—the White Lily of the plain is hid in the wood—the block-house is big, everybody sees it, and there is one inside to open the gate."

"True, red-skin—and as I always do say, I am in your hands; I'll go through fire and water for either Amy or Jane Moss."

The Indian pressed his hand warmly, and then they ate in silence. When they had finished, they drank again, stood up, and then Custaloga led the way into the forest, with the air of a man who had a long and dangerous trail before him, through, to all appearance, a trackless wilderness.

CHAPTER II.

THE BLOCK-HOUSE.

It was a lovely spot and a lovely morning. Nature had made it beautiful, and it could not be said that the hand of man had in any way taken from the native charms of the place. The advent of human beings may sometimes spoil the outward appearance—it generally gives animation and motion to what, still and deathlike, wants an attribute of beauty.

A belt of tall thick woods skirted on three sides a large clearing, partly natural, partly the handiwork of the pioneers of civilization, as might be seen by the charred stumps and the cultivated meadows and fields that were

richly ripening under the influence of an autumn sun. There were half-ripe cornfields, an orchard, a few meadows near the river, a haystack of last year, a garden fenced round with some show of care and taste—the whole occupying at least two hundred acres, cleared, cultivated, or preparing for cultivation.

But a little time before it had been a virgin wood, where not an ax had ever been heard, or ought of the white man known, save the crack of a terrible rifle in the hands of some daring hunter. And then several "broad-horns" had come, and axes had played their part, and fire had assisted, and log-huts had arisen. But such is man! The log-hut was soon discarded, and the double house had taken its place, while

"To cultivated fields the forest changed,
And where the wild beasts, now the tame ones
ranged."

By an effort of man's industry and ingenuity a spot of useless desert had, in fact, become a pleasing abiding-place, and the center of what soon would be a bustling neighborhood. And when we remember what the earth was given us for, why should we regret the loss of some wild beauty of scene, when in its place arise huts by the moss-covered rock, cottages on the slope of the hill, corn in the field, fruit-trees round the houses and everywhere abundance and happiness for man? Such was rising here on the banks of the Scioto river.

But the principal feature of the whole scene was the residence of the owners of this farm, in what, in the days of which we speak, was a thinly-peopled district, on the outskirts of civilization, infested by the wild Indian, with whom its owners had to do battle at one time or another for every inch of ground. In the days when the history of that time shall be written as ancient history, few will believe or credit the stories of what is called the dark and bloody ground of that place, where once wandered, in their panoply of paint and war, the wild men of savage heart, who only gave up their territory after fearful struggles; few will understand or credit any more the history of the hardy white pioneers, who first began to contest with them their exclusive right of hunting in the vast primeval woods of the mighty continent. The dwelling, or collection of dwellings, was inclosed by a stockade or line of palisades. These palisades were formed of quartered oak, which had been cut in the neighboring woods, ten or twelve inches in diameter and fifteen feet high, including the portion sunk in the soil, which was about a third of the whole length. Outside the earth had been banked up, thus forming a ditch, which, without much difficulty, could have been filled with water, had the calm existence which these wanderers had hitherto met with warranted this precaution.

The palisades, we have said, were of oak, the smooth side of which was set outward, and the whole strengthened by stout ribbers or wall-pieces, "pinned to them." To the left, toward the wood, was a gate of sufficient width to give passage to a wagon, and which served to admit the cattle at night. This was now, however, securely fastened on the inside, those within the palisade having sufficient respect for their own safety not to neglect this precaution.

On the fourth side the place was defended more by nature than by any fortification from the hand of man. The palisade at each end jutted out into the river about half-a-dozen yards, and rendered crawling round that way difficult. There remained a possibility of danger from the river itself. Here, however, thick and sharp stakes had been stuck in the ground, very close together, forming a kind of *chevaux de frise*, which was not without its advantages, seeing that behind them lay sturdy watchdogs of the wolf and St. Bernard

breed, that would not fail to give the alarm before any enemy could make an entrance that way. In the center of the water-line of defense was a kind of wharf, not more than ten feet long, which was quite open to the river on ordinary occasions, but could have a barrier erected in a very few minutes. This was guarded day and night by the two largest dogs of the troop, animals that were so attached and devoted to their masters as to feel no sympathy even for the blacks of the establishment, who cordially returned their hatred, transferring their affection to a certain lively cur dignified with the name of Turk.

Within this fortification, which in those days was much needed, there were several buildings; none, save one, remarkable in appearance. There was a very neat and well-built residence, one story in height, with a covered walk in front, which occupied the whole left frontage of the space within the palisade. Behind this, as well as to the right, were out-houses and dwelling-places for the blacks and for the humbler white dependents of the family. A garden, in the case of the more aristocratic habitation, filled with flowers chiefly in bloom, ran along nearly the whole frontage of the location; that before the department devoted to the negroes and servants being composed of more useful "stuffs" than the beautiful ornamental products of the "master's plot," as it was called. A wide path, well kept and rolled, divided the two, and marked the clear difference that existed between those who were born to command and those whose lot it was to obey; a difference, as far as the whites were concerned, very much narrowed by the issue of that contest which had been raging between the mother-country and her half-emancipated colony, now an independent and free nation.

In a most conspicuous place, between the two parts of the extensive farm-buildings which Judge Moss had thought proper to erect, for some reasons of his own, so far away from what was then called civilized settlements, stood a building which was the admiration—in fact, in some instances, the envy—of the whole border for miles away, wherever its reputation had spread. It was a block-house, erected for the defense of the farm from the inroads of the red-skins, whose wigwags and fires were at no great distance to the west and north.

About twenty-eight feet square in the basement story, it was thirty in the story above, which thus projected over the one below—a plan generally adopted in all American block-houses—with a view to defending it the more easily when at close quarters. Few Indians would venture to assail the doors and windows of such a building, when its inhabitants could fire directly down upon their heads. The materials of this sylvan fort were, as would naturally be expected in such a locality, all wood logs, a foot in diameter, ruddled squared, and not only bound together by an ingenious system of dove-tailing, but by mortar carefully poured in wherever an interstice was observed. Thick oak shutters, solid wooden bars, a smooth and shelving roof, too acute to give long resting-place to any fiery missile, completed, with several loop-holes, the outward appearance of a block-house, which, though it had never yet been used, was not likely to be long before its value would be appreciated, if the rumors from the frontier were true.

It was the summer of 1790—or rather the fall of the leaf was at hand, the summer having nearly passed away; and within a few days hints and scraps of information had reached the ears of many in that neighborhood—those of the Big House almost alone excepted—of a harassing and destructive war with the Indians having commenced; a war made all the more fearful by its being

conducted by whites who had deserted their homes and kin to league with the red-skins. The brutal massacre of Wyoming—with all its hideous details, was far from being forgotten, though ten years had elapsed since it was perpetrated. As yet, however, the events which happened on the beautiful plains of the Susquehanna had not found imitation on the Scioto or Ohio waters. But within a few weeks facts had come to light which spread alarm and terror through those new settlements, which, while the fierce struggle was going on between England and Congress below, had escaped the devastating curse of war, and now, when peace was declared, was to be visited by its terrors. But Tecumseh, though very young, was already at work organizing the tribes, and several encounters between some of the hardy and daring trappers and the red-skins had taken place, especially those trappers who, having suffered in other places, had vowed deadly hostility to every thing in the shape of an Indian. One whole family, not ten miles distant, had been surprised and utterly destroyed; the Wyandots were out near Wheeling; Mr. John May of Virginia, traveling in a flat-boat on the Ohio, with Charles Johnstone his clerk, Mr. Jacob Styles of Virginia, one Flinn and two Miss Flemings, had just been shot, with one of the females, at the mouth of the Scioto river, the rest being carried into hopeless captivity; while the massacre of Big Bottom had just become known through the escape of the two Ballards, the sole survivors.

But here all was still and calm, and any one standing on the opposite side to the block-house, and looking at the peaceful scene, would never have imagined that events of such a fearful character were taking place so near this picturesque fort. The Scioto swept calmly by, wide, still, and shallow; and though to the west it turned sharp round, and brought a projection of its bank within fifty feet of the block, it was generally about sixty or seventy feet across. The banks were almost wholly shaded by trees on this side, and a little up the stream several logs lay in the water, having fallen there naturally, or having been cut down and left to rot.

The dawn had not streaked the sky many minutes, when the clatter of hoofs was plainly heard in the distance, and a tall, bony horse came in sight of the block itself, though it and its rider, or rather riders, could not be seen from that building. As if they had no wish to be discovered by any one who might be on the lookout, the horse was suddenly reined in, and the two beings that had clung to his back leaped off, and stood erect side by side.

The first, the one who had been on the saddle, was the negro we have already alluded to; the other was an Indian.

He was, however, no common red-skin, and in even those wild settlements would have excited a thrill of horror in any white man or woman who had suddenly confronted him. He was an old man of considerable stature. His face was painted in part white, that is, the nose and the forehead, up to where the hair began. This was daubed with red ocher. A bunch of feathers hung down from his scalp-lock, while over his mouth and chin he had painted a red hand. His nose, which we have described as painted white, did not in reality exist, having been hewn off in a drunken brawl. The place where it had been was painted. Crowfeathers formed a muff round his neck, with wampum beads. His arms were painted and naked, but he wore leggings, skunk-skin moccasins, a dirty blanket, and had a rifle, tomahawk, powder-horn, and scalping-knife. He looked a specter, a mummy of his race, under the degrading influence of the fire-water which had so materially assisted in weakening his people.

"Yah! yah!" said the negro, shaking his fist at the block; "all berry fine and cut big dash now. Berry soon make him laugh 'noder side ob him mout."

"Ugh!" exclaimed the Indian, drawing a long breath, as if glad to be released from his awkward position on the horse's back—"got mor'um?"

"Ees, Massa No-Nose," said the black, handing his gourd to the red-skin, who put it to his lips and drained a draught which showed how accustomed he was to the fiery liquid. "Now dis child 'ab ob nebsesity to leab you. Massa Big-Nose him sobby him duty."

The Indian, who was an outcast from his tribe recently returned at the sound of the war-whoop, nodded and stalked away as if further conversation were useless.

"Dis child him distrust dat feller," said the black to himself; "nebbber mind; him keep a berry sharp obserwatory on him."

And with this sage remark he advanced to the very edge of the stream, and hailed the block-house. A short pause ensued, and then a stir was to be noticed; two young blacks moved down to the water's edge, a flat-bottomed boat pushed off, and in ten minutes more the whole three, with the horse, were being ferried over the stream to the Big House.

The Indian meanwhile advanced up the river and disappeared.

About a quarter of an hour later, two other men came in sight, both evidently wearied and sore-footed. They were Custaloga and Harvey. They moved slowly along the trail, until they came to the place where the horse had stopped and the negro and old Indian had alighted.

"Wagh!" said Harvey, seating himself unhesitatingly on a log. "That varmint has given me a run. My! I shall never get my wind again. Oh! won't I pay that nigger out? If I don't scarify his black hide, my name ain't Dick—that's all."

"They were two, and one a red-skin," replied Custaloga, looking on the ground.

"Two, and one an Indian—now that beats me all to leather, it just does. How do you know?"

"There's the foot of the negro—this is the moccasin and the trail of a drunken Indian. Come."

"Ouf!" said Dick, rising with a grunt, "but pitch ahead; though I am dead beat, no Injine as was ever made shall see me pull up."

He rose, looked at his rifle, and followed in the footsteps of Custaloga, who was already stepping quietly in the trail of the Shawnee, facetiously named No-Nose from his want of that necessary organ, which is generally considered to be as ornamental as it is useful. The footsteps were easily traced to a grove about two hundred yards above the block-house. At the edge of the small island of timber they halted and listened. Nothing could be heard. Custaloga peered, for some time, into the thick shadow cast by the trees, without his face exhibiting any emotion. Then his features suddenly lighted up, and as suddenly changed to an expression of deep disgust, as he turned to Harvey, and without a single word mimicked the sleeping of an intoxicated man.

He then handed his rifle to his companion, drew a thong from his person, and entered the wood with all the calmness of one who was taking a stroll in a familiar street of some town of the settlements, leaving Harvey standing like a statue, without motion, scarcely breathing in his anxiety. Kneeling down, however, he presently caught sight of the Shawnee, who was leaning with his back against a tree, perfectly still, his head bowed on his shoulder. Not quite certain that this was not pretense, Harvey slowly passed his rifle through the bushes, and took deliberate aim. Then he saw the form of Custaloga gliding from trunk to trunk, until he paused behind that against which the Shawnee slept.

The thong was round him in an instant, and his arms pinioned.

"Come," said Custaloga, aloud. "I have wandered in the forest, and I have caught a skunk."

Harvey caught up his friend's rifle and darted through the bushes, never stopping until he sunk exhausted in front of the hideous marauder, who, unarmed and tied, gazed at his captor with stupid, sottish surprise. He had traveled all night with the black, stopping to drink and rest the horse several times, and, overcome by rum and fatigue, had neglected the usual precautions used by his race, and paid the penalty.

"Now, Custaloga, is that a Shawnee? If he is, he's an uglier one than ever I see'd. I could lift his hair myself—the dirty, loping scoundrel. Is that one of the warriors we are afraid of?"

"Did my brother ever see the wild horse of the prairies?" asked Custaloga, who always adopted his most figurative style of speaking when in presence of any but his most intimate friends.

"I conclude I have—why?"

"When the wild horses see one that is weak and useless, they fight with him and drive him away, until he becomes strong and his mane is thick, and he can bound over the rushing stream. When the storks would fly to the east—to the country whence comes the sun, they meet and try their wings; those that can not fly well are driven away. When a Shawnee is a squaw, his tribe take thongs, and drive him away. This is Musk-wash. His people saw that he was a squaw and loved fire-water, and they sent him to make petticoats for the women of the pale-faces."

"Now, that's straight up and down, and as clear to my mind as greased lightning, old boss," said Dick, whose language was very much that of his favorite companions, the trappers. "But why have the varmints taken him back?"

"The faces of the Shawnees are darkened; they can not see; they have taken a skunk for an eagle."

The eye of the old Shawnee flashed lightning as he looked hard at the other Indian, and seemed to regain something of his consciousness.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, with an accent of the most profound astonishment—"Custaloga!"

"Muskwash! I am Custaloga, and I have hunted with my father. But my father has drunk of the fire-water of the pale-faces, until he can not see a friend from an enemy, and No-Nose has joined the men of his tribe to fight the Americans. Muskwash has drunk rum until it makes him forget. When have his tribe gained by fighting the pale-faces? The hatchet has been buried, and the white man hunted there, and the red-man here—why has the hatchet been dug up? Custaloga has lived with the pale-faces, and he knows them—they will come, and they will kill the red-skins, and make fields of their hunting-grounds."

"Wagh!" exclaimed the other, rousing himself. "The pale-faces are thieves—they steal from the red-man his forests—every moon brings them nearer. Where are the red-men to go? The great Manitou gave us these plains. Shall we not defend them?"

"Muskwash, your son hears you and laughs. The pale-faces were quiet. The old white head," pointing to the big house, "never took a scalp. He comes here to live and hunt like the Shawnees. He sees that there are many deer—enough for him and the red-skins—and he and the red-skins were friends, the pipe of peace was smoked, the hatchet was buried. Why has a black snake crawled between the white head and his friends?"

The glance of the drunken Indian was ferocious, and at the same time full of a wonder which, had he been a grave warrior, he would not have betrayed. He said nothing, however, allowing the two young men to unfasten him from

the tree and bind him afresh, without a word or a struggle. They then advanced to where the fallen logs lay, and Custaloga drew from an admirable cache of his own making a canoe sufficiently large to hold them all. They motioned the Shawnee to enter, and, when he was seated, followed, and struck out into the stream toward the block-house. They no longer spoke, but paddled warily, casting uncertain glances at the forest on the opposite shore, which they knew to be so big with danger to themselves and those whose interests they appeared to have so warmly at heart.

They soon glided to within a few yards of the wharf, and were pushing aside the ferry-boat to enter a kind of harbor, when a loud, hearty, and somewhat authoritative voice hailed them.

Custaloga bounded to the shore beside a stout, portly, but severe man of about fifty, whose high forehead, white hair, and simple but elegant costume, appeared to announce him at once as Judge Moss. His chin was somewhat heavy, and his air cold, but he was still a handsome man—one would have said in the very prime and force of his manhood.

"Judge, he is but one of five hundred devils now raging in the woods. When Big Bottom, with its sixteen rifles, has been razed to the ground, it is time for the Big Block to prepare. Secure the black who was out to-night. He is the traitor who is to open your gate to the red-skins."

"My child! my Amy!" exclaimed the judge, shaking like a leaf.

"Must be brought home," continued the Indian, who, with his friends of the block, spoke very simply.

"Merciful Heaven!" cried the judge, clasping his hands; "and I, that left all to come here, that I might have naught to do against the old country that gave me birth, nor the new one I had adopted."

Custaloga listened with an air of some surprise, but the glance vanished as he looked uneasily around.

"Where is the black man?" he asked.

"In the kitchen, eating," replied the judge, almost mechanically.

"Have the Shawnee taken to the prison-room in the block," said Custaloga, who then moved rapidly away toward the offices. Well acquainted with every part of the farm, the Indian glided along without noise, and soon stood by the door of the kitchen. Looking in, he saw the black surrounded by the whole sable community, eating and talking with all the importance of a traveler, after a journey in a far-distant and unknown land.

"Now you just leab dis child some time to eat. Tink a nigga no hungry? Him tell he oberb, but gib him time. You Gosh, just you cease dat fun—eh, what hab you dah? Behind me, eh? Now none ob your nonsense."

"My black friend has been in the forest—did he see any red-skins?" asked Custaloga, advancing close to him, when he noticed that he was discovered.

"Golly! golly! Wah you come from, eh, Massa Custa?" said the negro, starting.

"From the Blue Spring, where I saw many red-skin warriors, and one black traitor. Move, and this tomahawk ends your wretched life."

With these words, Custaloga caught the terrified negro by the collar, waved the sharp ax over his head, and drew him away to the block, leaving the others in the kitchen huddled up in a corner, in great alarm and surprise at what they had seen. At the gate of the block they met Judge Moss and Harvey, with the Shawnee in safe custody.

"Golly!" said the negro, as he gazed at the late companion of his ride.

"I am a magistrate, and as such

I have a great mind to try you both on the spot," said the judge, who, from the words of Dick, had gained a knowledge of all that had passed. "What has made you want to betray me, you black rascal?"

The negro sullenly looked on the ground and made no reply.

Custaloga opened the lower room of the log, and then led the way to a small room in the corner, into which he thrust the two captives, after tying them in such a way that their escape appeared impossible. He then fastened the door on the outside and left the block-house, which he further committed to the guard of a stout youth, by name Bill Harrod, who detested the negro, and, indeed, despised his whole race, though the other blacks in the establishment were excellent, faithful, and attached servants. He then, as was the custom when he resided at the block, washed off his paint, put on a coat, linen, and other articles of dress, and stood erect, a handsome but tanned frontiersman.

"Now then, Custa," said the judge, affectionately patting him on the shoulder, "I can find time to thank you for your intentions, for your bold and earnest devotion, for your long journey this night. I can never reward you; for where could I ever find the price to pay such a man as you?"

A proud but covert smile played round the Wyandot's mouth, and the expression seemed to tell that the judge could easily reward him if he liked. Before, however, the observant Moss could catch its meaning, it was gone and replaced by the Indian's usual calm look.

"Give no thanks," said Custaloga, "you are my friends here. But the big house is not full—Amy must sleep to-morrow with her father and sister."

"She must! she must!" exclaimed Moss, eagerly, while his whole expression changed to one of care and anxiety. "How is it to be done?"

"Why has the Fair-Hair gone to the Crow's Nest?" asked Custaloga, musing.

"Clara, the wife of Walter Harrod, she who was her foster-sister, is sick, and has a young babe; and Amy would not be crossed, but went down to Crow's Nest to stay a week or ten days until the woman is strong. I wanted her to send up Suky, but she said that no one was like a sister."

"Good," said the young Wyandot, his whole face beaming with intelligence and delight, and, as usual when excited, mixing up in a strange way the two educations he had received—that of the woods and that of civilization. "Amy good girl. Custaloga bring her in safe or die."

They were entering the breakfast room, where Jane Moss, assisted by a negro girl about sixteen, was making coffee and seeing to the proper arrangement of the table, which almost groaned beneath the exuberant plenty.

Jane Moss was not more than sixteen herself. She had small, delicate features, a profusion of golden locks unconfined and untouched by powder, soft, blue eyes, blooming cheeks, a little, tiny mouth, that showed small, white, regular teeth, a pretty, round chin, and such an air of home, of gentle, almost infantine simplicity, that strangers had often mistaken her for a mere pretty doll, especially when her beautiful sister, the admiration of the whole country, was present. But those who knew her, knew that Jane was not only graceful but useful, pretty but good, and possessed of a fund of sense and an energetic will which she inherited from both her father and mother.

"Good-morning, pa," she said, running up and kissing him before she noticed that he was not alone. "Ah!" she exclaimed, retreating, "Custa, is that you? and Mr. Harvey too? Upon my word, we are favored this morning. Grace, go tell Flora to put on some extra pounds of venison and bear's meat

for Mr. Harvey, who, when he comes from the woods, generally has not eaten for a week."

"Miss Jane," replied Harvey, speaking without twang or vulgarity—the Eccentric Artist was only wild in the woods, where he loved to be a trapper in appearance and language—"I am indeed hungry, for I have been traveling all night, when I should have been in bed, with no other idea in my head than that of serving one who can see nothing in me but my appetite and my rough habit."

"Nonsense, man; be not so modest. No one—if I am the person served, as I fancy you mean me to understand—can appreciate better your power of limning. I never saw a more natural bear than that you sent me a month since, were the front paw not a little too large."

"That was a hasty error," exclaimed Harvey, blushing; "but it is not of painting that I now speak. Things of more moment have brought me here with Custaloga, from the Blue Spring in one night on foot."

"Is there sign of hunting being good, and would you take us up to see the Indians of Chillicothe drive the deer? I am ready," laughed the merry girl, pointing to a slight rifle hanging against the wall, with which she had been taught to shoot without a tremor—in this, like many women of the frontiers, who, thanks to this terrible accomplishment, had saved their little ones.

"Hush, girl," said the judge, who with Custaloga had listened to the exquisitely modulated voice of the girl—the one with the dear pride of a father, the other with the tender affection of a brother; for as a brother indeed did Custaloga feel to Jane. "Hush, girl. Harvey came not for any idle amusement, but to save our lives and scalps from the bloody heathen."

"Amy!" exclaimed the girl, faintly, the roses leaving her cheek so quickly, they seemed never to have been—"Amy!"

"Custaloga will fetch her," said the young Indian, quietly; "he knows paths none will follow. To-night, when the sun hides the wicked and the good, he will go."

"Alone?" whispered Jane, involuntarily glancing at Harvey with a timid and anxious glance.

"What am I made of, Miss Jane?" asked the Eccentric Artist, reproachfully. "When I discovered the intentions of the loping thieves of Shawnees, my first word was for Crow's Nest. But Custaloga said 'the Big House,' and I, like a school-boy, followed. Somehow or other, when he says a thing, I do it. To-night he says 'Crow's Nest,' and to Crow's Nest I go."

"And you do well, Mr. Harvey," exclaimed Jane, heartily, as she shook the Indian by the hand—"follow my red brother, and you will never do wrong."

"Thank you, Miss Jane," said the Indian, with a slight tremor; "if all were like you, the world would be a happy place."

Jane blushed to the temples at this reference to a subject which she too well understood. But Custaloga did not pursue it.

"Eat," he said, quietly, to Harvey, "and then lie down. We have a long journey. The sun will set and rise before it ends."

The Eccentric Artist did as he was bid, and about half an hour later the two weary wayfarers rested in their beds, while Judge Moss went round, and, explaining the arrest of the negro and the capture of the Indian, set the whole of the men in the block on the alert. Rifles were brought out and cleaned, sentries appointed, and the whole farm assumed the character of a place in a state of siege. Harrod, as the most experienced hunter in the block, started into the woods as a scout. His orders were to beat the forest cautiously in all directions, and return at night to report what he might have seen.

Scarcely had he departed when a couple of horsemen rode up on the opposite bank and demanded to be ferried over.

"My son! Heaven be praised!"

exclaimed the judge, whose whole affections and thoughts were centered on his children—and then he added, carelessly, "that is Barton of Scowl Hall with him. A good rifle and a strong arm. I fear Amy begins to dislike him much. Sip, make haste and ferry your young master over, and keep your tongue quiet, mind."

"Ees, massa—Sip him nebb'er say word—he too much like 'coon—bress you—"

The black pushed off rapidly as he spoke, and in a few minutes the block garrison was strengthened by the presence of Charles Moss, a keen sportsman for his age, and Squire Barton, a jovial, daring man of thirty-five, whose rifle, Bring-down, was celebrated some fifty miles below this settlement, where he only visited occasionally, tho' deeply interested in those who dwelt in it.

CHAPTER III.

A SNAKE IN THE GRASS.

YOUNG Moss and Squire Barton were welcomed to the block, not only as an accession of force, but because it was likely, coming from a long hunting party, they might know something of the events which were taking place on the frontier. They, however, shook hands with the judge with such carelessness and so much jollity of manner that the old man looked first at one and then at the other with startled surprise.

"Have you seen or heard nothing of the bloody red-skins?" said he, anxiously.

"Nothing, my dear sir," replied young Charles Moss, heartily.

"Red-skins!" exclaimed Squire Barton, with a sneer; "I'd eat all in this part of the world."

"Then you had better begin with the one who is prisoner in the block," said the judge, gravely.

"A red skin in the block a prisoner!" repeated the son, more earnestly.

"Some boasting fool of a Wyandot, or a follower of your dark friend, Custaloga," again put in the squire, who always spoke of Indians with a sneer.

"Ay! ay!" said the judge, shaking his head, "'tis the custom of youth to scoff and doubt. The red-skin is a scout of the Shawnees, and was captured by Custa himself, who overheard a plan last night to attack and destroy this—my poor dwelling."

"That Custa will lead you into trouble some of these days, judge. I say, never trust a red-skin, and, above all, never believe him."

"Squire Barton, all in this settlement know the misfortunes of your house; for this reason, I excuse your general dislike of red-skins. But Custa speaks the truth. Had I doubted him, I have the corroborative evidence, as we say on the bench, of honest Dick Harvey, and the negro himself did not deny the fact."

"What negro?" said young Moss, anxiously.

"Spiky Jonas, my son," replied the judge, mournfully. "I know not what I have done to wound his feelings, but the black had given us up to the slaughter."

The son turned away with a lightened color toward the breakfast-room, whence now issued Jane, who greeted her brother heartily, and the squire with a formal politeness which was very much the practice of the day.

"It seems, dear Jane," said the young man, smiling, "we have come in time. Where is Amy?"

"Tis strange she is behind," replied Jane, casting down her eyes.

"Good heavens, and you are all so still!" cried Squire Barton, impetuously. "If there are Indians in the woods, she should be fetched home without an instant's delay."

"She will be fetched home by Custa and Harvey," said the judge, quietly.

"Pooh! But how long is it since they started?" asked the other

"They sleep. When the night comes they will start; they traveled for seven hours in the forest yesterday even, and 'tis but right they should restore their weary limbs. Besides, Custa says that the night trail is the safest."

"I have no doubt of it, judge, not the least," said the squire; "but as you will. Since we must wait, I am for accepting Miss Jane's hospitable offer of breakfast. We, too, are famished men, who have traveled through the woods all night, and though neither Indians nor mad artists, are weary and sore-footed."

"Then come in and eat," said the father, pushing his son affectionately before him. "I am right glad to welcome you, my boy. Would to God that all those I love were here likewise!"

The whole party were soon in the breakfast-parlor, where a hot and smoking board greeted them, pretty Jane having, on the very first sound of an arrival, ordered every thing to be replenished. The two travelers sat down at once, and for some minutes nothing was said while the wayfarers satisfied the keen appetite acquired in the woods, by an eager attack on the viands so plentifully supplied them.

Young Moss, who was not more than twenty years of age, was a very admirable copy of his father, though somewhat taller, and with an apparently more open and frank brow. He wore an elegant hunting tunic, a shirt-collar very wide and turned over, an ornamented horn and knife-case, and carried in his hand a small, light rifle, recently imported from Europe.

Squire Barton was a man about five and thirty, or more, one of those men who, by shaving off every particle of hair upon the face, contrive to assume a perpetual juvenility. He wore short, curly hair, which shaded not his forehead, but exhibited every particle of it to view. It was a low, white forehead, kept thus fair by a cap which was almost always drawn over his eyes. His eyes were the feature that struck most observers; they were so cold and chilly-looking, and yet were keen and piercing, without, however, one spark of brightness, one flash, one solitary change of expression, at all events that ordinary man could tell. As the female sex, when judging a man's personal appearance, generally are first struck by his eyes, no woman was ever known to smile on Squire James Barton. A miserable man must he be, on whom woman never smiled.

His cheeks were thin, his mouth small, concealing a row of teeth white as ivory, but somewhat sharp and long; while beneath this was a small, pointed chin, where nature had placed a thick beard that James Barton never allowed to rest without attack from a sharp razor.

A plain ill-favored man was James Barton, the Squire of Scowl Hall, on the banks of the Susquehanna; a man of wealth, not only in landed estate, but in large sums of money invested in the British funds, which in those days, despite the new republic and the loyalty of the people to the noble edifice founded by Washington and his comrades, gave him great and marked consideration.

And yet, as it was not the wealth he so notoriously enjoyed that influenced young Moss, many persons wondered at the constant companionship of the fiery and impetuous youth with the cold, sneering squire.

The fact was that Squire Barton was to his friends the most hearty of mortals and the most genial of companions. He dearly loved his glass, and could set the table in a roar. Then he was a keen sportsman, knew how to track 'coon or panther, to crawl upon a herd of deer, or hunt them with the fiery pine-knot at night. He could find his way at any time through the trackless forest, and had met alone and unharmed more adventures with Indians than Boone or Flehart. All this was a power he knew the force of, and had brought

it to bear upon young Moss with great success.

And then he was suitor for the hand of Amy Moss, the lovely elder daughter of the judge, and, though she was not yet eighteen, he had been so four years, and was, too, an accepted suitor. It was rumored, however, that, though the young girl had accepted him at fourteen, she showed him much less favor now, and did not even accept his presence and his addresses willingly, though she did not turn him away, because it would have pained her father.

In this way, then, Squire Barton was a frequent visitor at the house of Judge Moss, where he played at backgammon with the father, hunted bears and deer with the son, went boating with the girls, toward whom he was so humble and so gentle, that they could not under any pretense be harsh or rude to him. Squire Barton had no difficulty in persuading both Amy and Jane of his sincere and devoted attachment; for that which is true is so eloquent, it speaks trumpet-tongued for itself; and Squire Barton passionately loved Amy, and had for Jane all the tenderness one feels toward a favorite and cherished sister.

The breakfast party was cheerful enough under the circumstances; and then, when it was over and the squire had kept up a fire of banter for a while with merry Jane, he intimated his wish to rest—a wish warmly seconded by young Moss. A large room, so arranged that they could start from it at early dawn, to follow the chase without disturbing any one, was always ready, and there they went. The younger man, without any hesitation, jumped into bed, and in a few minutes was fast asleep.

Not so Squire Barton. He drew a chair near the window, which was open, and, lighting a pipe, began to smoke, looking all the time at the sentinel who had recognized him, and appeared to be thinking deeply.

The following was the account Harrod always gave of what followed, an account substantially true in every particular, though involving no explanation of subsequent events. He was smoking, to while away the time, his back leaning against the block-house door, and the squire was smoking too. Presently, his tobacco ran out, and after cursing his ill-luck, he was about to put away his pipe, when the squire spoke.

"Harrod," says he, "I see your pipe is out. So is mine, and I have no more tobacco here. I do not like to wake young Mr. Moss, or I should go round—but I'll keep guard while you go. Ask Miss Jane for my pouch; it is on the breakfast sideboard. Leave your musket against the door."

The sentry afterward freely confessed that in so acting he was wrong, but still he conceived that there could be no danger in agreeing; so he laid down his musket which he was about to take with him, and went round for the tobacco-pouch, which, after considerable delay, he found, but not where the squire had left it. He then hurried back and found the squire whistling, with his back to the window, his gun all safe and unmoved, and not a sign of any change. Then he and the squire smoked a pipe, after which Mr. Barton said he was sleepy, closed the window, and appeared to go to bed.

Nothing more passed for twenty minutes, at the end of which time he was relieved.

About two o'clock in the afternoon Harvey came out of his bedroom, ready dressed for the expedition of the night, with his gun in his hand, with which he walked into the ornamental garden, and began to clean and polish it up with great gravity. It certainly was a little dirty from two or three days' outlying in the woods; but then that was the work of a quarter of an hour, and Harvey kept polishing away with his soft leather for more than twice that time, and whistled, as if to keep up his

sprits, a bar from some popular ditty of the day.

If the gentle reader has ever been in love, he will understand why Harvey stood patiently polishing his gun-barrel, looking at the pan and brightening it up a dozen times, when we explain that he stood beneath a latticed window, at which he covertly glanced every minute or so, until his color heightened and his eyes flashed as two wavy ringlets shook behind the little white curtain, and then Jane Moss might have been seen taking her seat near the window, with some work in her hand.

"Is that you, Mr. Harvey?" said Jane, in a tone of well-affected surprise; "I had thought it was Harrod whistling to pass the time while mounting guard over the prisoners."

Harvey looked somewhat aggrieved and amazed at being mistaken for Harrod, being too simple in love to detect the artifice by which pretty Jane Moss concealed her having been drawn to the window by a knowledge of the artist's presence. Like many of those whose brains are kindled by the fire of human genius, the Eccentric Artist was utterly without guile. His reply partook of this feeling, then, and pleasure both.

"I thought Miss Jane too quick to mistake big Harrod for one so insignificant as myself, or rather me for big Harrod. But the afternoon is hot, and under the shadow of this wall it is pleasanter than in the house."

"Is that meant to excuse your own trespass, Mr. Harvey, or is it a direct invitation to me to come out of my cell?"

"I should not presume to invite Miss Moss to share such dull companionship as mine; but if the honeysuckle and roses have any charm for so keen a lover of the beautiful as you, I should advise you to come out and sit on your old seat," said Harvey, timidly.

"If Mr. Harvey has not quite forgotten the purpose which first made him a visitor to the block, his old pupil will come out and show her work for the last month, unless Mr. Harvey is so intent upon polishing his gun into a mirror to admire his sweet countenance by, as to have no leisure."

"Dear Miss Moss," exclaimed the delighted artist, "have you then been at work, and have you really pursued your studies? Pray pardon me if I spoke not of it before."

"I will excuse and pardon if you are very good, and don't find too many faults," said Jane, as she withdrew from the window.

"I protest—" began Harvey, but Jane was gone. "Was there ever so sweet and fascinating a creature in this world?" he added to himself, with a sigh. "Ah, me! what is the use of one like me, an orphan, half educated, with nothing but my gun and brush to depend upon, looking up to such as she? It is clear lunacy. But she is so lovely, so gentle, and so good, I can not help it. The savage bear in the woods may fall down and worship the good and the beautiful if he likes, and no one blame."

But here she comes to check his humble soliloquy; and with a cheek quite pale with emotion, he hastened to meet her. Jane was herself as timid as a fawn, and feigned to be intent upon her picture to give herself a countenance. She laid it on the seat and sunk beside it. But all her joyous manner was gone. She was grave and earnest.

"Mr. Harvey," said she, when he had ventured to seat himself about a foot away, "you and that noble Custa are about to enter upon a dangerous journey. Your object is a sacred one—to fetch my sister home. Heaven will bless you for the deed. But be not reckless of danger. We expect you back to defend your friends here."

"And, please God, we will come," replied Harvey, solemnly. "Who would not die to defend you and your sister?"

"You are very chivalrous," said

Jane, with a faint laugh. "I know that Custa will stand by us to the last, but we have no claim on Mr. Harvey."

Oh, the waywardness of woman's heart! If Jane's real thoughts could have been known.

"I know not what I have done," replied the young man, sadly, "to make you doubt me; and there is some truth, perhaps, in the words that you have no claim on me, if you mean that I am not a relative, nor an old friend; but, Miss Jane Moss, I do believe that no old friend will be found to show deeper gratitude than I will for the kindness I have received in this house. I am not a boaster; but time will show."

"Thank you," said Jane, more warmly than usual; "but these are dangerous times, and many will desert when bad times come. But I did not tell you, my brother and Squire Barton are just in. We have then two good rifles, I believe."

"Two as true rifles as ever rung in the forest," exclaimed Harvey, "even up in old Kentuck with Boone. I am right glad to hear your brother has come—I wish I could say as much of Squire Barton, but I agree with Custa in this, and like him not."

"Custa likes him not!" said Jane, hurriedly, while a blush suffused her cheek. "I knew not that. Why does he not like him?"

"I thought you knew it," replied Harvey, quickly, "or I should not have mentioned it. He has never told me, but as he conceals it from you, though I do guess it, I will not betray his secret."

"Not even to me?" said Jane, coaxingly.

Harvey looked at her with a glance of surprise, and a flush on his cheek quite crimson.

"Not even to you," he continued, "though Heaven knows I would rather tell you any thing than any one else."

"Custa loves my sister better than suits his color," said Jane, quite coldly now.

"I care not what his color is," said Harvey, warmly; "but this I know, that the girl who wins Custa's heart has reason to be proud. But Custa loves your sister scarcely as well as he loves you—he is deeply grateful to you both, but he does not love Amy as you suggest. If he has any choice, it is you he likes best, for he speaks oftener of you—and it is natural, as you are the more beautiful of the two."

Timid Mr. Harvey! You can find a way of your own, though, of saying things.

"Mr. Harvey," said Jane, blushing as red as the rose close to her feet, while she gazed too at him in unfeigned astonishment, "you must be mad. Amy is the most beautiful girl on all the borders. I am surprised to hear you talk of such a doll as I am beside Amy. But enough of this. I did not clearly understand, this morning, your story of the meeting in the woods. If it will not weary you, pray tell it again."

Harvey had half prepared a solemn protest against Jane calling herself a doll; but his speech was ingeniously cut in two, stopped and utterly destroyed by this interruption; but whether or not Jane intended so to do, is one of those feminine secrets, one of those instances of true female intuition and instinct—generally pure, lofty, elevating—which we have no right to inquire into.

Harvey asked himself no question, but began his story, which he told with all the frankness of his heart, but with much also of that picturesqueness which is the peculiar province of the artist. He was so often questioned, had to be so minute and particular, and was asked for so many explanations, that time passed away most rapidly, and Jane was summoned to attend the supper-table an hour before she expected, the regular midday meal having been dispensed with. The picture had never once been thought about.

"Thank you, Mr. Harvey," said

the mischievous girl; "if it's only half true, it's worthy of the days of chivalry, and Spenser might have written another Fairy Queen about it."

So speaking, she hurried away, followed by the young man, quite overwhelmed by this sudden outburst from one who for two hours had listened so attentively and shown such deep interest in his discourse. They reached the supper-room, where they found none save the attendants, and the judge, who had taken a siesta.

"Where are the squire and Charles?" asked the judge.

"Still sleeping," replied Jane.

"And Custa?" said Mr. Moss.

"I left him reading," observed Harvey.

"Call them, then," continued Judge Moss, "for supper is ready, and these brave lads must soon start."

A negress went as she was told, and in a few minutes Charles and Squire Barton entered, Custa gliding behind them almost unnoticed. The whole company at once sat down to their meal, which was of the usual plentiful description, and for some time little or nothing was said; there was a kind of restraint on the company, which all felt, though none acknowledged it. The greeting between young Moss and the Indian had been silent, though cordial; but Squire Barton did not attempt to disguise the bitter sneer which curled upon his lip. But Custa looked at him vacantly, as if there had been no such person in the room.

"Custa," at length exclaimed Judge Moss, playing uncomfortably with his knife and fork, "I know that secrecy is an Indian virtue—"

"Ugh!" said Custa, who affected unusual adherence to his red-skin habits and manners when in the presence of Squire Barton; "did a pale-face ever gain any thing by talking on the house-tops?"

"Not much, Custa; but I am a father, and naturally anxious to know your plans, since they affect so much the safety of my child."

"The gray-beards of the whites are wise and brave men; but they have hearts as warm as a woman. If the stricken hemlock would speak with Custa, let him say the word. We shall have supped soon, and Custa and his white friend will smoke the pipe of peace, where no roof is above, save the blue sky, and where none may hear but the trees, which have no tongues."

"Go, father dear, with Custa," said Jane, gently; "go and smoke the calumet with our brave friend, and give him from yourself and me a thousand kind wishes for our dear Amy."

"And tell her that if I do not come," exclaimed Charles, impetuously, "it is because I am not sufficient of an Indian to follow Custa—at least he thinks so—while some, too, are needed here."

"Charles Moss is a good warrior," said Custa, rising; "but few feet make a small trail."

"And conceited people never like to be ruled," muttered the squire.

Custa passed out of the room as if there had been no such person in existence as the squire. He was followed by the judge, who lit his pipe and took his seat beside the Indian, on a bench under the dining-room window.

The night had come on suddenly, and the whole place was wrapped in deep darkness. The moon did not rise until late, so that the travelers would have several hours of night before they had any fear of being betrayed by that luminary. They could not see more than a few yards. The dim outline of the water's edge and of the distant trees could be distinguished but faintly and indistinctly, yet well-defined to the practiced and keen eye of a woodman.

Custa, who had brought his rifle into the garden, began quietly to load it. He had cleaned it some hours before, ere he had taken up a book.

"Custa" said the father, who,

alone with the young Wyandot, did not hesitate to manifest his deep anxiety, "what mean you to do? Can I be of any use?"

"No!" replied the Wyandot, solemnly; "but trust to me. Miss Amy shall rest by her sister's side the day after to-morrow, or Custa will be dead."

"I know your devotion, mysterious and inexplicable as it is," said the judge; "but oh, Custa! excuse a father's anguish. If the Indians are roused, I have every reason to dread the worst. Do you hope?"

"Custa has found salt and meat on your board," continued Custa, solemnly; "he has slept in your house, and the fair girls have taught him wonderful things—to read in a book—and Custa knows that all the pale-faces are not wicked. Let the white-leaved oak then be glad—the smile of the fawn shall be seen in the house ere the third sun has set."

The judge took his hand, and was about to reply, when the Indian drew his hand away, clutched his rifle, leveled it, aimed at the very edge of the palisade, and fired.

"What is it?" exclaimed the judge, while the whole mass of individuals in the block rushed out, Jane, Harvey, Charles, the squire, and all the hunters, block and farm assistants.

"Go look who is in the block-house," said the young Indian, as he calmly reloaded his rifle; "you will look, and none will be found."

Harrod, Harvey, and two others bounded toward the block-house with waving torches, opened the door, entered, and then came rushing forth again with wild and passionate gestures.

"The nest is there, but the hawk and the crow have fled," said Custa, quietly, he not having moved from the spot where they had left him.

"They are gone," replied Harvey, furiously, "clean gone—and yet the doors were all fast."

"Who is the snake?" asked Custa, quietly.

The whole group shuddered and crowded up closer to the Indian, as the fearful truth enforced itself upon them that there was a traitor in the camp. None spoke for an instant, and each man or woman looked at his or her neighbor with a glance of awful meaning. The demon of suspicion had taken up its abode in that charming resting-place, by the waters of the pleasant river, and within echo of the majestic forest trees.

The still night, the gloom, the sighing breeze, the vague darkness on the opposite bank, the probable presence of enemies, and those enemies the loping Indian, with reeking scalps around his waist, his ear attuned to such music as the cries of dying children, the shrieks of the victim at the stake, the wild, passionate entreaties of mothers asking mercy for their innocent babes, carried a pang of horror to every bosom. The ruthlessness, the inhumanity, the glorying of the Indians over the massacre of the whites, the awful scenes so common on the borders—homes pillaged, whole families destroyed, or when young, carried into captivity worse than death—were things familiar as the dawn of day to those on the outskirts of civilization, however little note may be taken of them by the moralist or the philosopher, regretting that the red-skins are falling like the leaves of the tree before the wind, ere they are ripe and ready.

The voice of the judge first broke the silence of that panic-stricken group.

"There is a snake, Custa," he said, in accents that trembled with agitation and alarm; "there is a snake in my house—a Judas, a traitor, who eats of my bread and drinks of my cup, and yet has sold me. Woe unto him when the day comes that his sin is discovered!"

"The time has come," said Custa, solemnly, "that the Dove must be sought for."

And he turned to Harvey and

whispered a few words in Delaware—a dialect both understood.

He then moved silently away, walked to near the water's edge, sat down on a log close to the river, and gazed fixedly at the opposite forest. He sat, however, deep in the shadow of the stockade.

"Custa says," began Harvey, "that if you would rest safe this night, you will let two sentries mount guard together, each man treating the other as if he were the traitor."

"His advice is good and shall be followed," said the judge. "Woe is me! I would rather have given them a bag of dollars and a blessing, and sent them away to tell our number and weakness, than have this curse upon my house. But Custa is right, and it must be."

"He says," replied Harvey, "that the dogs—"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the judge, "the dogs never barked."

"The negro fed them, and they never bark at those who come from within—and he bade me say the dogs will still keep the water—look you well to the stockades. Harrod we all know, and it would be well if he scouted outside. Custa says that he could see every inch of the line if he lay where the grave of his mother gives a shadow on the plain."

All shuddered, for they guessed the awful motive of the Indian.

"The Indian is about right," said Harrod, solemnly; "that is judgmatical and 'cute—it's just, I think, and proper, seeing no other he nor no man can tell who the traitor is—leastwise he's right—he means right and up and down this: Bill Harrod 'ud never lie close to his mother's grave if he meant any sly Injun artifices."

"Perhaps, honest Harrod, he did mean all this," replied Harvey; "but he did not mean any thing harsh. When things have come to this pass, a man must be careful."

"Custa is right, and Bill Harrod is the man as says so—there is a precious, creeping, crawling snake somewhere about, and that's a fact. This child wud just like to see his fangs, that's all—he'd extract 'em in a coon's whistle, or a bear's jig, which is moderate time. It riles me, too, to be taken for a low serpent as never went no higher in creation than a sink-hole; but I'm your man, judge; when you're ready, I am."

"You shall go, Harrod," said the judge; "and though I would as soon suspect my own son—yes, I say it, Harrod, my own son—my duty just now is to act as if I suspected everybody. But I should like to say one word to the Wyandot."

All turned to the log where last they had seen him; but not a trace or sign of him was to be discovered. He had disappeared so mysteriously that none could explain his departure, except by some wild agency like that which had enabled the Shawnee and the black to escape from the block-house.

Again there was a hush and a whisper, and then the crowing of a cock was distinctly heard, at an hour of the night when cocks do not usually crow.

"'Tis Custa," said Harvey, with a low laugh. "I am but a white man, and yet I must join him as mysteriously. Stand back and let me go as he has told me."

The bold artist took his gun, bade adieu to all, and glided up close to the palisade. Along this they saw him go, with the step of a ghost, until he was close to the water. He was seen no more until about five minutes later, when a canoe was noticed floating along the stream, apparently without any human agency, in an opposite direction to that by which the fugitives had disappeared. In another instant it was invisible—hid by the heavy gloom cast by the tall trees upon the slow-moving waters.

"God bless them!" said the judge, fervently, "and may they bring me back my child."

"God bless them!" sobbed Jane, of whom, with all the solemn and stately mien of an Indian warrior, Harvey had avoided taking leave.

"God speed them!" repeated Charles and all the rest, save the squirrel, who shrugged his shoulders and turned away, after announcing his intention of watching all night with young Moss in the top room of the block-house.

Harrod took his rifle, called a companion to his side, shouldered his arms, opened the postern-gate, and sallied forth to that mound where the grave of his mother stood up from the surface of the plain, a sad and solitary memorial of the first and only death in that locality.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CROW'S NEST.

BETWEEN Big Muskingum and Duck Creek on the Scioto, about twenty miles distant in a straight line from Moss House, was a small log-hut, picturesquely situate in a woody bottom, and known to the few who were aware of its existence as the Crow's Nest. The log-hut was situated in a clearing, the work of one man's patient industry.

The forest had, not long before, covered the whole place. But a borderman had come, taken a liking to the locality, and soon, before his quiet and indomitable energy, the spot had assumed quite a new and life-like aspect. He came alone, away from a part of the country which to his mind was too thickly peopled, because a trail led direct from his house to a neighbor's ten miles off. And there he camped by himself, and next morning the sound of the ax was heard, and tree after tree fell before the woodman's heavy blows. Many days and weeks did he continue his labors, until two hunters who had bad luck, and one of whom was wounded, came that way. And the solitary woodman gave them food and the shelter of his tent; and when they were both recovered, they paid him back by several days of hard work, and at the end of that time, a solid log-hut appeared, where before was only a confused mass of felled trees.

Then the trappers went away, and the woodman was again alone. He piled up wood in great quantities for fuel, and then the ground being yet heavily incumbered, he burnt all the small wood, and made that wild forest dell appear pleasant and comfortable. This done, he laid up his few tools, shouldered his rifle, and went his way.

It was a little while ere he came back, and then he reappeared in the clearing one mid-day, leading a horse, on which was mounted a woman with a child in her arms. The woman was fair and delicate, with a mild and gentle expression which was strangely in contrast with the bulk of the hunter. He was nearly six feet high, with red hair and sandy whiskers, and a general jolly expression of countenance. Fun and good-humor were all in fact, the world in general gave him credit for; and yet in truth he was a man with a large heart—a heart commensurate with his bulk, and full of generous impulses and warm feelings.

She was a cheerful and smiling thing by nature, though a shade of melancholy sometimes stole over her soft and well-formed features; and though she did seem a frail and tiny mate for one so huge, there was a glance from one to the other which seemed to speak of earnest affection and real happiness.

Their story is told in a sentence.

He was a wandering youth, who never would be confined to the limits of a town. It might have been the vast expanse of the illimitable prairie, the unbroken extent of forest, which make America like no other land, had given him ideas of locomotion and travel such as induced Boone and other pioneers to go far beyond the settlements. Be this as it may, he did travel, and young as he was, became a mighty hunter, wandered up to the wilderness round Green River, and followed the chase even up to the Pilot Knobs.

Tall, handsome, merry, light-hearted, he was welcomed back to

his native village in the settlements with hearty good-will, every time he came down to sell his skins and procure powder and shot; all the girls especially—and somehow girls will admire fine, handsome men, which is annoying—always looked upon the return of the hunter with singular delight.

He was a merry fellow and loved a dance. He was the man for a "regular frolic," told odd tales about knotting panthers' tails through the bung-holes of barrels, and being carried up-hill for a mile; gave his partner a kiss "like a crack of a cart-whip," and did any thing, in fact, which youthful spirits and "corn-juice" prompted. Wild and harum-scarum as he was, he was known to be good in heart, true, honest and manly. And yet it was strange that Clara Barking, the minister's daughter, should notice one so rude; and yet she did. It was at a frolic where she went to look on a "pikernik," as the hunter said, where everybody brought "sunthin"—some a hick of meal, some a punkin, some a 'possum, some a few dried apples, some good teeth and a skin chock full of fun.

Clara just came to look on; but he declared she was the prettiest girl in the room, and, though her silk did outshine "homespun," and were "fancy doings," as good a girl as any; and, despite herself and her old aunt, made her dance, and indeed stuck close to her nearly all the evening afterward, whispering, in his good-humored way, all kinds of nonsense; and three weeks afterward they were married.

The old minister shook his head and wept in secret, as well he might, could he have foretold the future; but he was too consistent and simple a Christian to say aught against the hunter because he was humble and rough, when once he saw that poor Clara's heart was wholly won. So they were married, to the extreme surprise, and in some cases not only the prodigious astonishment, of certain young ladies, who had considered the hunter's attentions as rather particular.

The hunter now made a compromise between town and country life. He no longer went away alone up into the far-distant districts where he could hunt for weeks without meeting with a living soul; but he built himself a hut in the uncleared country, which, proving handy for calls and visits, he finally transported himself to, the place we have already described, and which he facetiously called the Crow's Nest.

He was now bringing home his wife.

"'Twill be a nice farm," said Clara, cheerfully, though she could scarce repress a shudder, poor girl, at the deep and mysterious forest, beyond which lay, at no great distance, the Indian town of Chillicothe; "'twill be a nice farm, Walter, when the ground is sown; but is it not rather near the Indians?"

And she cast a timid glance at the child of a year and a half old in her arms.

"Now, *Clayri*," replied the hunter, "you don't mean it. I'm a mean town teapot if I don't know what is right and what isn't. This log is located splendid. You'll have too many friends up here soon. It ain't above twenty miles from a house. So let's lift you and baby off—so ho! wo! and I'll fetch up the traps."

He lifted them off gently and kindly, and then went away to where he had left a boat, taking the horse with him. He soon returned with a load, and then another; and before night the hut was furnished, a fire blazed on the hearth, the horse was staked where he could feed at will, the watchdogs were chained to the two corners of the log, and "Wally," as he called himself, had the satisfaction at last of owning a house in his own style.

On the morning on which our narrative takes us to the Crow's Nest, great changes appeared.

The log-hut had been much improved; several creeping plants had been sown and had risen rapidly, and now hung in green and flowered festoons over the windows; a garden had been laid out and fenced, which Clara had herself cultivated, while by dint of large fires perseveringly applied, many of the stumps had been burnt away and a small field thus formed, which exhibited a goodly stock of pumpkins, potatoes, and other vegetables, while corn had been planted round other stumps at a different part of the clearing.

A little stream came rippling down into a pond near the door—a tiny stream, indeed, which had been guided by hollow logs from a spring at some little distance; and near this were ducks and geese and fowls, while a cow and several pigs gave a still greater air of comfort, and a settled look to the place which was quite cheering.

And there on a bench, not far from the door, under a bower of hops and honeysuckle, sat one who was even brighter and more beautiful than nature itself, in all its green and gorgeous array.

About the middle height of woman, she would, had she been a little older, have been majestic. But she was so young, and there was such an airy grace about her—a grace of sweet girlhood, that charm that lingers so long on some, one could not grant her majesty. Raven hair clustered over a brow very pale, not from ill-health, but some constitutional characteristic, while her deep, black eyes, that floated as it were in a bath of soft and warm light, overshadowed with their lashes cheeks as white, mouth as lovely, and chin as beautifully carved, as if Phidias had modeled her, and Pygmalion given her life.

The expression of her face was smiling and sweet just now, for she was teaching a child to read; but all who knew her, also knew well, Jane alone excepted, that her brow could frown, her lip curl, and her whole face exhibit disdain, pride, and haughtiness, to a degree that many had found painful indeed. But now, as she tossed back her curls—she had taken off her straw hat—and laughed and prattled with the child, and pointed with a pretended frown to the big letters in the spelling-book, who would ever have dared to say that she could be haughty?

And this was Amy Moss, with the child of Clara and Walter. She was giving it a lesson, to keep it still, while the young mother and another babe, but a few days old, lay quiet within the shelter of the hut.

Presently she rose.

"Willy, dear," said Amy, "go pick some flowers for mamma."

"Yes, Am," replied the child.

And Amy walked quietly and gently to the log-hut, making no noise, entering the house so tenderly that scarcely any save the quick ears of a sick person could have detected the sound.

"Is that you, Amy?" said Clara, in a whisper. They were relatives and school-fellows.

"How are you, now?"

"Sick at heart and faint. Where is the child?"

"Picking flowers for you, Clara, dear," said Amy, offering some cooling drink.

"God bless you, Amy!—I feel very ill to-day. Would that Walter were back! I do not think I shall get over this; something warns me to be ready to go. How long the child tarries!"

"I bade it go, that you might be quiet," replied Amy; "and now, Clara, none of those silly fancies; you are yet weak and low, which is natural; but no talking."

Clara looked gratefully at the beautiful girl, and then closed her eyes. Amy turned to the fire to replenish it.

As she stooped, she heard a faint shriek, and rose at once erect. The mother had heard it, too.

"Willy has fallen and hurt himself," she said, but so quietly, to please Amy, one could see she did not think any serious harm done.

"Willy," replied Amy, moving to the door, which, when she reached, she stood still—motionless, as if turned to stone.

The beautiful boy, not yet quite four years old, was held by the hair in the hands of a tall and savage-looking Indian, who raised his tomahawk to dash its brains out. Two bounds, and Amy was by his side, and had caught the ax in his hand.

The warrior turned sharply round and stared at the lovely apparition with unfeigned surprise and unqualified admiration. Fortunately for Amy, he was young and a chief who had seen something of the whites—one remorseless and cruel to the men, but generally kind to the women.

He laid the child gently down, and allowed Amy to catch it to her arms without any anger. He even seemed much struck by her gentle and almost maternal tenderness. A wild cry of anguish made Amy turn round, and make a dash toward the hut. But the young chief restrained her.

"My prisoner—stop here—go there—scalp," said the Indian, clutching her arm.

"Oh, let me go—save the mother of this child—quick—save her, save her!" shrieked Amy.

But the warrior held her firm, and by menacing and fearful gesture stilled the child's cries, while a fearful tragedy was being enacted inside the hut.

Clara had seen the bound and the startled, terrified look of Amy. Unable to bear the agony of suspense, she had crawled from her bed, her little squalling innocent held by one hand, and, holding onto the wall, had reached the door. Here she sunk on her knees, as she saw her poor Willy swung in the rough hand of the savage.

"My child! my child!" she murmured rather than cried.

At that instant a crowd of warriors came yelling round the house in all the hideous panoply of war and death. One wretch saw at a glance that Clara was no prisoner for them, being too likely to hamper their march, and with a malignant yell—Can we continue? Indeed, we must. We relate an event common, ordinary, of everyday occurrence, during the early days of the settlements on the Ohio; an event which, if glossed over or softened down, will leave our narrative incomplete—a narrative which, few characters excepted, and some dates crowded together, is strictly and historically true—with a malignant yell caught the baby by the feet, and dashed its brains out against the wall.

It was a tigress, and not a woman now. She rose with superhuman strength to her feet, stepped back, clutched a pistol from the shelf over the table, and shot the Indian through the heart, as he rushed to seize an ax that caught his fancy. She then fell to the ground, and was immediately scalped by one of the band.

The death—instantaneous and unexpected, the ball having reached the heart—of one of their number, roused the Indians to frenzy, and out they rushed to wreak their fury and revenge on Amy and the wretched child. But the warrior spread his hands over them and motioned them away.

The Shawnees, unable to kill and slaughter the prisoners of their young chief, Black Eagle, or, as he has since been called, Tecumseh, turned round in search of some other prey, and such was their infuriated state that, forgetting all caution, they began shooting the fowls, out of sheer wanton rage.

A cry from their chief called the whole party round him.

"There are pale-faces in the forest. Will the young men bring them down to see one of their wigwams in our hands? Go—you are boys."

And motioning Amy to rise, he turned toward the forest. The warriors, who were nine in number, sullenly followed, after fastening the dead body of their comrade on the back of the horse, and driving it with the pigs and cow

before them. This reckless exposure of their trail betrayed extreme confidence or deep design.

Amy looked at the hut with fixed and glazed eyes. Her face was rigid and without expression, her mouth open, while her hand clutched the quivering form of the child. She knew that all was over in the hut; she knew that that babe she had dressed an hour before so tenderly was gone; she had seen Clara fall, she had seen her scalped, and yet herself was spared. She even rose mechanically, took the child up in her arms, and slowly followed the Indian.

"Mamma! mamma!" cried the child, struggling.

"Hush—I am your mother now—hush, or the man will beat you," said Amy, wildly caressing the babe.

By much coaxing, and by her own wild and incoherent manner alarming the child, she stilled its cries, and soon disappeared with the savage and ruthless warriors beneath the arches of the forest; all but herself glorying in the deed of blood, which was in accordance with all Indian characteristics.

All was still and silent for about an hour and a half; and then, who came whistling through the woods a merry tune, the usual signal that papa was coming home? Who was it laughed and called to his boy to come help him carry that fat deer, which, lazy one, he would be glad enough to eat?

'Tis one who shall whistle and laugh no more, despite his large heart, his glorious spirits, and his keen sense of enjoyment. 'Tis one who comes to bow beneath the chastening hand of God. Will he accept the sorrow meekly?

Walter cast the deer at his feet on the edge of the clearing, and looked cautiously around. There was a dread of something, he knew not what, coming over him.

"'Tis playing quiet," he said, with a cold shiver. "Willy! Willy! my boy. Don't, now—no 'possum tricks."

He never spoke, he never laughed again, that sorrowing, grieving man. He had caught sight of the dead ducks floating on the pond; he saw clearly the trail of the Indians; and with a roar like that of some awful beast of the forest, he bounded across the water and entered his house.

He came out, bearing Clara in his arms, and laid her on the ground in the bright sun, and then near her he placed the mangled corpse of the poor infant. Then he walked round the house fearfully, as if looking for something else. But he found nothing, and came slowly back, haggard, pale, glancing his eyes fearfully into every thicket.

At last he started. Straight across a plowed field was the track of the Indian trail; and there were Amy's steps; and there, for a few yards, the tiny little shoe of Willy had left its print upon the ground. Then he had been taken up by Amy, as the agonized father conjectured from a slight change in her step.

Then that untutored heart, wild in many things as the savages who had made his heart desolate, stooped down and kissed the imprint of his child's foot upon the soft and telltale earth.

He then rose and returned to the place where Clara and the babe lay. She was quite dead—he knew it well. He had no hope, none whatever, here; and as he gazed at the beloved form of her whom he had prized so much that his love amounted almost to veneration, he gnashed his teeth, he tore his hair, and then wept a passionate, a bitter flood of tears.

His head rested on his knees; his eyes, closed firmly, were covered by his hands; and thus he sat a full hour. What passed within his mind—whether he prayed or whether he made some vow—no man ever knew. But at the end of the time he rose, and though his face was pale, his eyes sunken and haggard, all traces of tears had fled. That was over.

He turned and went into the

house, from which he almost immediately after emerged with a spade and pickax. It was in the garden, where a bed of flowers grew that had been planted by her own hand, that Walter began to dig his wife's grave. As he struck the pickax in the ground, a flood of tears again, despite all the energy of his character, burst from him. But he wiped them away with his hands wildly, and then continued his task solemnly, quietly, sadly.

He had dug to the depth of three feet, and was stooping to lift a heavy shovelful of earth, when he heard footsteps. He raised his head quickly, even furiously, and then a perfectly fiendish expression crossed his face, as he met the glance of an Indian warrior. He made a sign as if he would have bounded from the grave to where his rifle lay, when a voice checked him.

"Wally," cried the artist, "in the name of God, what does all this mean? Are you quite mad, too, that you do not recognize Custa?"

Walter came out of the grave and took a hand of each, which he shook with something of his old heartiness. Then he made signs to them to follow him outside the garden, and pointed to where Clara and her innocent lay.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Custa, who shook with agony as he leaned on his rifle.

"Dead and scalped," cried Dick. "If some red-skin don't pay for this mighty quick, I don't think I'll give them goss in no time."

And the artist dashed the stock of his rifle heavily on the ground.

"Where is Amy?" asked Custaloga, in a low, husky tone.

Walter pointed to the trail of the Indians. The two bounded toward it.

"There is her foot, and there is that of the boy," said Dick.

"Ugh!" replied Custa, "she is alive and safe for the present. When the morrow dawns we will be close to her. The sun will not set in the west for two hours. We must crawl like panthers after the wolves."

"Let us come and bury the dead," exclaimed Dick, who, when his feelings were much moved, always spoke distinctly and clearly.

"Wagh!" said Custa, coldly.

They went back to the edge of the grave, which was now deep enough, and over which Walter stood with fixed eyes and a solemn, earnest, sad, and melancholy mien that was truly heart-rending to look at. He looked at the clayey mold, and he seemed to think, was that the bed whereon Clara should lay her snowy form? was that the resting-place for her innocent babe? Two feelings seemed struggling for the mastery within him—hate and despair. Hate conquered, with all its wild, burning attendants—rage, revenge, fury, the whole horde of murderous imps that ride upon the most hellish of our instincts—because it is the most opposite to the holy precepts of Christianity, which men do scoff at and deny, because it is simple, not subtle; because it asks nothing of their boasted intellect, all of their heart and soul.

He brought his wife himself to the edge of the grave, after wrapping her in all his best linen and skins; he placed the mangled babe in its tiny cradle, and brought, too, his best articles of furniture and broke them up—for what purpose his friends could not say. Then he lowered her into the grave, and having laid her decently and gently down, placed her poor child at her feet, and with broken chairs and tables he began to build a kind of arch over her, that screened her form from the pressure of the earth which was to conceal her both from man and the prowling beasts of the field forever. The friends stood by without giving him any assistance, as he seemed to wish to do it all himself. They silently handed him whatever he appeared to want, and waited.

Presently he came out of the grave, gave one harrowing look into its gloomy and wild depths, for

so they seemed, and took up his spade.

Harvey spoke then.

"Shall we assist you, Wally?" he said, gently.

The other shook his head and began his self-imposed task with all the usual energy of a woodman. The earth sounded hollow as it fell on the hoarding of boards, and the two companions, white and red-skin, shuddered as its dull echo came to their ears, for both knew and esteemed her whose gentle spirit had once inhabited that mortal fabric. The Crow's Nest had been their favorite resting-place during their hunts in the woods, and there they had always found a hearty welcome, a bed and supper, from the kind hostess, the minister's dead daughter.

The grave was soon filled, and a tall mound marked the spot where rested the body, the soul being elsewhere in God's keeping, of Clara Barking once, then Clara Harrod; niece by marriage-ties to the judge, and sister-in-law to the honest sentry of the block, wife of one of the most celebrated characters in American border history, WALTER HARROD.

The grave was finished quite, and the hunter moved away to his house, from which he brought out a small barrel of gunpowder. He filled his horn quite full, and then he buried the rest about two feet deep, close to a charred stump. This done, he went back and set fire to his hut by piling up all the furniture in a heap, with hay and grass. As it blazed up he retreated to some distance, and seemed determined to see the utter destruction of his home ere he departed. He stood leaning on his rifle, gazing vacantly at the flames as they rose and fell, crackled and splurled in the warm air of that autumn day.

It was a terrible scene to view. That morning the clearing had been redolent of life; that man had left it to hunt the wild deer of the forest, with a happy, joyous smile upon his honest face; and his wife had whispered low that he was to take care of himself, for his Clara's sake and for that of the innocent babe and dear boy; and Walter had laughed, and bade Amy Moss scold her for talking so weakly of danger where there was none—and now the hand of the destroyer had swept away all that made that little spot a thing of beauty and a thing of joy—the soul had abandoned it, and naught was left but the outward frame, without animation, without life.

And the well-dried log-hut burned on high, and the flames rose furiously, and the blaze burst forth, and here crawled like serpents up along the roof, and here roared in the chimney, and the flowers dried up and perished in an instant, and smoke beat down about the fields, and Walter Harrod leaned on his rifle and laughed a wild, savage, horrid laugh, that was painful to hear.

"He will be ready soon," said Custa, in a low tone—"the panther is savage, the wolf creeps, the snake glides, the rattle-snake stings; but the white man will be fiercer than the panther, more sly than the wolf, more silent than the snake, more deadly than the deadliest thing. Every crack of his rifle, a red-skin will die."

"You are about right, Custa. He's awful riled and cut up; he'll be on the trail of the varmint in no time. I pity the red-skins he meets—they'd better be dead, that is all."

"The Great Spirit has taken away his brains," said Custa; "he is like child learning to walk. We must guide him, or he will fall into the trap set for the black bear."

"He must stick to us awhile—but he's making signs to us," replied Harvey, who, followed by Custaloga, approached him.

He sat down, spread some provisions, motioned to them to eat, and did the same himself, after swallowing a horn of potent corn-juice, which few men in these days could have stood without wincing. But the trappers and backwoodsmen were always accustomed to

drink spirits undiluted with water, and in very large quantities. Abstinence was unknown in those days; when some men drank huge quantities, they were the drunkards; some drank in moderation—they were called sober and temperate.

Neither Custaloga nor Harvey refused the offer, and for some time the trio sat in gloomy silence. Then that man, Walter Harrod, the SILENT HUNTER, arose, shook himself, and made sign that he was about to follow the trail of the Indians. His friends made no objection. All looked to their rifles, felt for their knives, and then away they went along the wide open trail, which seemed to lead toward the Indian village of Chillicothe.

They had now entered upon a task of extreme difficulty, danger and doubtful issue, one that required the exertion of all that acute perception and that indomitable courage which mainly led to a successful end the enterprises of those bold men who did the work of civilization on the borders of the early settlements. Harvey having proposed, and the Silent Hunter making no objection, it was considered accepted, that Custaloga was chief of the expedition. He at once, therefore, assumed the lead. They moved in Indian file along the clearing—Custa first, then Harrod, then Harvey, until they reached the western extremity. Then they all turned round and gave one sad look back at the scene, after which they again advanced, and were soon utterly out of sight beneath the leafy arches of the forest.

The hut smoldered, the sun shone, the dead slept, while the domestic fowls flew away scared and frightened; and that which in the morning had been a little earthly paradise, a picture of joy and pure delight, was now a scene of desolation, decay, and death.

But about a quarter of an hour after the departure of the three avengers, a solitary Indian straggler came out of the woods, gazed with a singular expression of surprise and ferocious delight at the scene, and then striking the double trail, plunged again into the gloomy cover of the forest, on the immediate track of the white men.

CHAPTER V.

THE SILENT HUNTER'S CACHE.

THE trail was clear and obvious. There were the marks of the Indians' feet, of the girl's moccasins, and the hoofs of the loaded horse, of the cow, and the grunting drove of pigs, that straggled every now and then as they went along, and were driven into order, or goaded to advance at the point of a lance. They were able in this way, with so sure a track, to proceed with considerable activity and ease, the more that the route was a beaten trail which the Indians were wont to use on their many friendly visits to the Crow's Nest, where hitherto they had been received with extreme friendliness by the hearty woodman, who had often hunted with them, and even fought with them, when quite a boy, against their hereditary foes.

They trod upon the trail then, one after another in deep silence, until the wind began to sigh over the trees, the gloom to collect overhead, and the forest began to assume that mysterious and solemn appearance which is always presented by extensive woods on the first approach of night. It was about a quarter of an hour before dark that they came in sight of a stream, one of the tributaries of the Scioto river.

"Hist!" said Custa to his companions, who were moving listlessly on, Harvey admiring with the eye of an artist the changes produced on the leaves by the crepuscular light, the Silent Hunter moodily reflecting on the past, and brooding on the future.

All three stood instantly like statues, though a tremulous nervousness shook for an instant the stout frame of Harrod. Then they

gazed curiously where the finger of the Indian pointed to a small column of smoke rising from the water's edge. They again advanced, but no longer on the trail, having concealed themselves beneath the deep shadows of the interior of the forest. In another instant they saw that it was an abandoned fire, and they immediately emerged freely into the small open space by the banks of the stream. All three instantly sought the trail on that side first, and then on the other, by wading. But all trace of the whole party was gone.

"This is Indian devilry with a vengeance," said Harvey, angrily. "Have they spirited her away, or have they hid in the trees?"

"Hist!" replied Custa, "there are ears in the forest. Look at the stricken pine—he has no tongue—he is silent as the tall tree of the forest that rocks the humming-bird to rest, and sings no lullaby that can wake the echoes."

"If he ain't got a tongue, and a *locum* is inconvenient to him," continued Harvey, smiling, "he has got eyes—look, he has found something."

Harrod was on the other side of the stream near the fire, and when they joined him they found that he had discovered the bones and some small parts of the cow, which had been slaughtered and in part devoured. The horse was also immediately afterwards found, just behind the bushes, cropping some grass, and so hopped that it could not go far away.

"Ugh!" said Custaloga, in a low whisper.

"This is the queerest start I ever saw. I guess we've got an ounce of dust in our eyes, or we can't see for the dark. I suspect they are just hid close by."

The Silent Hunter shook his head.

"Water is soft, and earth is hard; but the earth leaves a mark and water shows no trail."

"That's it," said Harvey; "they had canoes—by gum, they must be in force. They've slummucked the pigs and the cow-beef, and left no mark."

"In the morning we will rub our eyes and see clear," replied Custa; "they have put the plunder and prisoners in the canoes, and have walked. But they are not coons; they will not deceive a Wyandot. In the morning we will find their trail."

"I suppose you are about right," said Harvey, "and that we're bound to wait. But this is a hot-tish place for a camp, I conclude, Custa. My scalp kind of crawls at the idea of sleeping here."

The Silent Hunter made a sign for them to follow him. They clearly understood by his manner that he had a better place to show them, and they had already, by his directions, entered the bed of the river in an upward direction, and were fifty feet from the fire, when he clutched them both violently, and imposed solemn silence by a gesture which was not to be mistaken.

The gloom had now settled on forest and plain, the song of birds, the gobble of the turkey, the cry of the sandhill crane had ceased, and naught was heard save the low whispering of the trees, as their heads met and kissed, and that mysterious song of nature, a kind of low, hushed, broken chord of some Eolian harp, that often accompanies in vast solitudes the setting of the hot sun—the fall of night being felt almost as well as heard.

But a step was in the forest—a step advancing stealthily, it is true, but with some little want of caution at times, as if the benighted stranger were sure of finding friends round the fire which he saw blazing in the distance; for the woodmen had purposely roused it from its dying state and made it blaze on high.

Then a dark form appeared on the edge of the circle of light, the very extreme edge, peering slowly around, listening with the ear of a startled deer. Something made him dart back to seek cover, but

it was too late. Simultaneous with the click came the sheet of flame and the swift messenger of death. He bounded on high, gave a wild yell, and then fell flat near the fire. Harrod, who had done this deed, went quietly back, finished the unfortunate wretch, and then came to join his companions, who conversed in inaudible whispers relative to the conduct of Harrod, which was clearly that of a man who had bound himself down to a mission of revenge.

In another instant he was by their side, and passing them, led up the stream toward what the two hunters well knew as the Devil's Gully. They had implicit reliance on the woodcraft of their huge and fearless companion, who knew every turning in the forest; but still they had so often, during panther and deer hunts, visited the spot, that they could not understand how he was about to use that place for the purposes of concealment.

In about ten minutes the water began to rush swiftly by, the banks came nearer and nearer, they were wading far above their knees, and then they stood at the mouth of the Devil's Gully.

The night was dark, but, their eyes now growing accustomed to the gloom, they could distinguish the principal features of the scene. The banks of the river were now suddenly projected upward to a height of fifty feet, about half the way up precipitous rock, with a bush desperately clinging here and there, the other half a shelving mixture of earth and stone dotted with trees and shrubs. Below, in the depths of the gully, all was dark; even the silvery thread of water, that in the day, when the sun dived down to cool its rays in the very caverns of the night, might be seen running swiftly along, could now only be heard, rumbling, rushing, dashing by like the waters of a sluice.

Harvey could not restrain an exclamation.

"This is almighty grand!" he said. "I guess they don't beat this in the island."

"Come," replied Custa.

Harrod had disappeared. "Hillo! where is he?" exclaimed Harvey. "He ain't carried away by the water, is he?"

"Come," said Custa, again; "there is a trail in the swift water. Let your hand never leave the left rock. The eyes of an eagle could not see—we must feel like moles."

Harvey obeyed, and found, by keeping his hand gliding along the rock, that he thus walked on a ledge, that was scarcely covered by the water, which swept furiously by, deep, within two inches of where he walked. They moved in utter darkness. They saw nothing but the rock they touched with their hands; they heard nothing but the swift current to their right.

Harvey was advancing, still wondering when all this groping in the dark would end, peering forward to try and catch a glimpse of those who preceded him, when suddenly his hand slipped from the damp, cold rock onto what appeared stubble, and he heard the voice of Custa by his side instead of before.

"Wagh," said the Indian, whose manners, language, mien, actions, were one continual struggle between his savage and civilized instincts, those of childhood and those of manhood—"a beaver in a dam, a fox in a hollow tree, an otter in a hole, never made such a *cache* as this. Wagh! it is good."

A torch which the Silent Hunter now lit with his tinder-box, revealed to Harvey the nature of the place. It was a niche in the rock, about fifteen feet high, ten across the mouth, and as many deep, overhung so by the two banks that even a fire could not betray it, while even in the daytime smoke would have been dispersed ere it reached the summit of the tall trees.

"It's a rare burrow—a reg'lar fox's hole. I expect many an old four-legged red-skin has done the

dogs here, and will ag'in. My! It's beautiful. This is your old *cache*, when you came up here afore there were any settlers in these parts."

Harrod bowed his head.

He had fixed the torch in a piece of wood which had been cut and planted for the purpose. He left the two friends to do the rest, though he showed them a hole in a corner, where there were wood, deer-meat, a jug, and some skins. Harvey and Custa quickly made a fire and cooked their supper, which having finished—in this passively imitated by Harrod—they lit their pipes and prepared for a "big talk" on the duties they had to perform—duties which did not affect them in an equal degree; for what can equal, what be like, the earnest solicitude of a passionate lover, whose mistress is in the hands of such ruthless beings as the wild savages of North America?

And Custaloga, the brave and devoted Wyandot, did love Amy with all the wild ardor of his half-tamed nature—loved her, too, without hope, without future, without an idea that his love could ever be aught save a dream—and thus, perhaps, had his affection risen to the greater height, as it was invested with a melancholy and sadness, which to his wayward nature, but half conquered by education, was not without its charm.

Custaloga loved Amy, the affianced bride of Squire Barton, for whom he had an instinctive dislike, which, however, had never manifested itself as yet in any way save that already described. He ignored his existence.

Amy saw this and wondered.

But her secrets were not privileged to reveal until the day and hour when she avows them herself, and deprives them of that veil of obscurity and doubt which we may not raise, even though, from the journals, notes, and letters before us, we have already mastered the mystery.

"What is Harrod up to?" whispered Harvey, as soon as he had loaded his pipe to his own satisfaction.

Custaloga looked not to the right or left, and yet his eagle eye had caught the outward character of his occupation in an instant. He was whittling.

In his hand was a long piece of pine-wood, which he was striving to bring into shape with his hunting-knife. After some labor he succeeded to his satisfaction, for he ceased and proceeded to bore a hole through one end, through which he afterward passed a thong. He then, with a grim and ghastly smile, cut one notch.

All this while the two friends, who were thinking over their plans, had watched him in silence. But as he cut the notch Harvey gave a cry of surprise and horror.

"It's a tally, Custa. Hundred thunders!" cried he, "what a mole-eyed, one-eyed gunner I am not to have seen it afore. It's a tally, and that notch is for the first Indian. Why that stick will hold a matter of two hundred."

"On the waters of the wide lake," said Custa, holding up his hand toward the north, "the redskins wear a bead for every scalp. Our white brother cuts a mark in a little bit of wood. Carry it about like the little gods of the priests."

"Bah!" said Harvey, "not our priests; you will confound the Romans with us."

"They all worship the same Father," replied Custa, in a low tone, talking rather to himself than to Harvey; "why does one man say one thing, one another?"

Custa sighed. As yet religion had not fully touched his heart. He understood Christianity to a certain extent, and yet the faith was not in him, though Amy and Jane had both striven for years, aided by Clara's father, to open his eyes.

The Eccentric Artist made no reply, not wishing to enter upon a topic which had often induced

heated arguments between them. He smoked his pipe with redoubled vigor, and gazed with a mysterious awe at the bereaved husband, whose kindly nature and warm heart appeared to have utterly fled before the fierce, untamed passion of revenge.

To speak to him he knew was useless now while the night of sorrow and wrath was on his soul, concealing all that was bright and good on earth, and prompting him only to deeds of darkness.

"Harvey," said Custaloga, when he had smoked his calumet pipe in peace for some time, "my heart is very sad; the singing-bird is safe in the wigwam of her father; but the queen-bird is silent in the lodge of the Shawnees."

"She is, Custa," replied Harvey, moodily, "and must be got out, if we fight the whole tribe of dingy catamounts."

"My brother," said Custa, affectionately, "is a brave, and not a boaster; he talks of fighting a cloud of men, but he does not mean it. The Shawnee villages are as many as the weeks of the year, and each village has more warriors than there are days."

"Then by all the b'ars in Kentuck, what is to be done?" exclaimed Harvey, impatiently.

"When a fox sees a fat partridge in the grass he does not fly at it, because he has no wings; he creeps and glides, while the birds nestle; and though they do fly, he is quicker than they, and runs into the woods with his prize."

"I understand you, Custa; you are up to some devilry you learnt among the Wyandots. Well, well, it's your natur', Custa, and I won't gainsay it. Besides, in the woods it's right—I know it is. Indians ain't regiments, and forests ain't regular battle-fields. What do you propose?"

The young Indian rose to speak. There was none of the semi-educated gentleman about him now. He was all red. He laid down his calumet and his rifle, and assumed all the dignified mien of a chief and a warrior. The two white men looked at him—Harrod vacantly and listlessly, Harvey with that deep earnestness, that strong affection, which, by some strange instinct, the secret of which he little knew, he had always felt for Custaloga.

"The Shawnees are women. There are beasts in the forest, and birds in the air, and fish in the streams, and warriors in the great hunting-ground under the setting sun; but they are too lazy to hunt the forest, too idle to shoot the bird, too stupid to fish the stream, too cowardly to fight with men. There are a few long-knives in the woods, men who make themselves wigwams, and grow corn to make themselves their bread, and hunt, and fish like red-men, doing them no harm. And they buried the hatchet, and smoked the calumet of peace with the Indians. But the Shawnees are skunks—they shake hands with the right arm, and kill with the left. They have come like red foxes, and they have stolen the queen bird"—here he spoke fiercely, and then his voice sunk to a melancholy softness that was quite musical in its deep, mellow sadness—"they came like cowards, like skunks and pole-cats, and they have killed a woman, and the little pappoose that could not walk, and stolen the little bounding-deer, the son of the pale-face with the large heart. They are gone, like beasts, to burrow in their holes. But men are behind. Let them look, and they will gaze on warriors; one of them has already seen the face of a brave."

And he bowed gracefully to Harrod, who, however, made no sign.

"The great heart is weary; the friends of Custa need rest. Let them lie in the cache to-night, and follow on the trail when the sun lights the earth. Custa will go alone."

"Where to?" asked Harvey, quickly.

Custaloga then developed his plan, which was simple enough.

There was an Indian village about nine or ten miles off, and though in a straight line, the way was difficult, yet one used to the woods could go and return in a night. Custaloga believed from his intimate knowledge of the tribe to which Tecumseh—the young chief who had saved Amy—belonged, that the prisoners would in the first instance be taken to that place, as the nearest, and also because it was close to the village of Tecumseh himself, who doubtless would claim Amy as his prize.

"But how do you know it was Tecumseh at all?" said Harvey.

"My brother is very quick of eye, but he is not an Indian, born in the woods. Can you read the little marks on a book?"

"Well, Custa, what a question; you know I can."

"And an Indian can read the print of a foot," said the warrior, with a grim smile, as he saw the pun, but could not check it.

"Now for an Injun to make a joke about the print of a foot and the print in a book, is mighty queer," put in Harvey; "wouldn't Jane laugh and show her pretty teeth. She'd say six years' study had done you good, too."

Custaloga remained silent a moment, as if ashamed of his weakness, and then continued his explanation in the same dignified and solemn manner in which he had commenced it.

He proposed to enter the village under cover of the night, trusting to his skin, and discover, roaming about, whether Amy was really there, as this would materially aid their plan the next day. He undertook to return before daylight in time for a short rest.

"'Tis plaguy risky," said Harvey, moodily. "I don't like it, Custa. A pretty kettle of fish if you get took."

"I will not be taken," replied Custa, simply.

"I know you won't—but you'll be worse," continued Harvey, sulkily.

"Custa will not be scalped—he has long legs," said the Indian, again.

"You promise that? Now mind—if you are found, you'll make tracks and run."

Custa made signs that he would, and then began taking off every particle of dress that looked like an assumption of civilized garb. In an instant he stood almost in a state of nature, an apology for a tunic beginning at his waist and hanging to within four inches of his knees, and his moccasins, being his whole dress. He then took from his hunting-bag the necessary materials, and began painting himself with great care. Harrod, however, quickly took the matter out of his hand, and finished him off so perfectly, that Harvey quite started.

"I wouldn't advise you to let Amy see you," he said, gravely.

"Ugh," replied Custaloga with the deepest guttural sound he had yet uttered.

"You know she don't like you in any Indian fixings—but in that she'd hate you."

The young warrior looked very grave, but made no reply. He was ready, and standing up, his rifle in hand, his horn and shot-pouch hanging from his naked shoulder, he said a quiet good-by, and prepared to depart.

"Nonsense, I'll come down the gully with you—"

"The night is very dark, the stones are slippery—stay—the red-skin warrior will go alone."

"Willful and obstinate, like all his race," said Harvey to himself. "Ah me! it's a risky thing, a very risky thing. The lad must be in love with Amy."

And thus roused, his ideas took another road, and soon led him on to think of Jane; and once directed into this current, he lost all recollection of every thing else, and sunk into one of those dream visions of love and hope and joy, which come sometimes in the still

solitude of night, whether we lie in down-beds, or on the hard rock or grassy earth, with naught above us but the canopy of heaven.

At last Harvey fell asleep, but he did not sleep long, for when his eyes opened again, the fire burnt still brightly, and Harrod lay in so deep and heavy a slumber that he could scarcely have replenished it. Harvey sat up, lit a pipe, and his thoughts turning toward the young Indian, he began to feel extremely uneasy. What he had undertaken he knew to be perilous in the extreme—one of those Indian artifices, which succeed sometimes from their extreme boldness and audacity, but which are attended with an amount of danger and difficulty which make them rarely used, or only in extreme cases like the present, where the feelings of the actor impelled him even to the verge of rashness.

Harvey gazed at the sleeper with pity. He lay still now; his stormy passions, his fearful sorrows, his regrets, his anxieties, his burning desire for vengeance, all at rest; and perhaps—who can say?—some sweet and cheering dream of the dear ones, some soft vision of the night was his, giving to his soul some of that pleasant rest which the body derives from cessation from labor.

"He sleeps—poor fellow, I must not wake him," said the artist, gently. He always liked that fearless spirit, that warm-hearted though wild hunter. "How hushed and still this place is! Ah, what is that?"

He leaned down carefully in the dark shadow of the rock, clutching his rifle, as a heavy body was clearly heard above, making its way through the bushes. On the opposite side of the gully the bank rose about twenty feet precipitously, and then sloped back—an inclined plane, covered by shrubs and trees. Through these some body of considerable weight had appeared to slide, and then stopped close to the edge of the cliff.

Harvey peered cautiously up—it was bright moonlight now—and raised his rifle, expecting every minute to see the glaring eyeballs of an Indian looking down upon them from that height. The noise continued, the bushes parted, and the head of a panther, that had scented out, with his keen and horrid instinct, the presence of men, came looming out in the pale moonlight.

"My!" muttered Harvey, and then without a moment's hesitation, he fired.

A roar, a yell, and then a bound, proclaimed that the savage beast had fallen, or made a spring at them. Harvey instinctively drew back to clutch his knife. The smoke of the gun prevented his seeing any thing at first, and then he beheld the panther, which, wounded and bewildered for an instant, had missed its aim and fallen into the river, preparing for another spring.

The fierce, untamed brute, the only approach to lion or tiger on the American continent, glared wildly at Harvey, and hung out his horrid tongue, just as he prepared for the fatal spring. The artist shuddered, and dropping his gun stood with his back to the wall, his long, keen hunting-knife presented at the beast, the handle resting on his chest. The panther gave a low whine, wagged its tail, and advanced its paws onto the edge of the niche.

This moment was fatal, for at the same instant a dark, shiny object swung in the air, and a huge and ponderous American ax came down with irresistible force on the cranium of the beast, which, stunned, its head split open, fell back with a savage cry and was carried away by the rushing stream.

"My!" said Harvey, drawing a long breath, "that was a sledge-hammer hit, I don't think. Harrod, I'm much beholden to you. I did feel mighty skeered—that fellow would have eat me up slick. Well, you're off again, are you? You take it quiet I expect. I don't. I mean to have that skin—it's a

And taking only his knife, Harvey descended onto the ledge, and began groping his way down the gully, which was a little more light than in the evening, under the influence of the moon's pale, cold, and quivering rays, that dropped here and there through the open space between trees and boughs. He advanced the whole length of the gully before he saw any sign of the unfortunate brute; but there at the mouth of the ravine it lay by the bank, motionless, still, quite dead. The tremendous force of the woodman's ax, wielded by such an arm, had caused death to be instantaneous.

"It's mighty tall brute," said Harvey, "no now was a rude trapper—a mighty tall brute. I expect that skin will make a fine rug for Miss Jane—so, lest the wolves should tear it, which *would* be a pity, I'll just skin it on the spot."

And he did. He drew it ashore, and there, regardless of danger, laughing at the wolves, forgetting his own lesson to Custaloga, forgetting that the loping and murderous Indians were about, he sat down, and never stopped until the skin was quite clear of the carcass. Then, and only then, he started on his way upward to the niche, carrying his prize in triumph.

He laid it up safely, and then, somewhat tired of his strange occupation, he went soon to sleep, and slept so heavily, that nothing disturbed him, not even the howling of the wolves, as they fought and gorged themselves over the body of the dead panther.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FROG'S HOLE.

MEANWHILE events were elsewhere taking place, which are so essentially necessary to the proper understanding of our narrative that we must leave Custa to perform his journey, the inhabitants of the block to grieve for Amy, and she herself to continue on her way with the Indians, while we introduce characters who will have much to do with the elucidation of events, and the clearing up of the mystery which attaches to a very large portion of our narrative. The early events of our story have, however, been, in relation to incidents, so rapid that we have not been able to turn to what may in the outset appear a subject of minor interest, but which will in the end be found to be absolutely necessary to the understanding of what follows.

At some distance from the Scioto river, up toward the hills, hitherto chiefly frequented by wild trappers and men of the woods, by bordermen, and by a race of some bandits left by the war, horse-stealers, cow-thieves, and others—about three hours' hard ride from the Moss, and an equal distance from Scowl Hall—was a shanty, log, or farm-house, which had obtained, from the locality in which it was situated, the name of the Frog's Hole. It was notorious by name to most of the wild bordermen—had been used as a place of refuge by runaway negroes; but was chiefly the rendezvous of the abominable race of White Indians, or renegades, who played so infamous a part in the war, and who, as outlaws and outcasts of society, were compelled, when they wished to meet for the purposes of conspiracy or amusement, to select some spot where they were safe from the honest white men: from the Indians they had nothing to fear. Here it was that the spies, too, of the British army were wont to quarter during the war; and here might often be seen Red-Bird the Shawnee, Simon Girty the ex-American, now the bitter enemy of his countrymen, whom he had betrayed; Captain Peter Druyer, a Canadian, once in the service of England, now a wanderer; and here, during the war, the celebrated Captain Duquesne had often organized his expeditions.

A small and beautiful glen, with pines and larch and alms bursting

from its fertile sides, conducted the waters of a pleasant stream into a little pool or lake, which, after barring up the entrance of the valley, again fell away to the west, and by a winding course gained the Scioto, and then the Ohio. A path round this pool led, by a number of steps in the rock, to a rustic lodge, opening on to a platform, upon which was built, leaning against the rock, a house of somewhat antique appearance for that part of the world. It was built partly of stone, and partly of wood.

It was a quaint old building, the inn of the Frog's Hole. For about five feet from the ground it was of stone, moss-covered, and fastened together by plaster. Then rose a wall of planks, supported on the inside and the out by beams of wood that reached to the first story, which was a kind of loft, made use of as bedrooms, and to be reached only from the outside by means of a ladder. The house was longer than it was deep or high, extending some distance along the rock, and showing such a goodly row of chimneys as to hold out a promise of plenty within. And plenty there was for those who had money to pay, as Ralph Regin was a man who respected his customers, and took care they should want for neither meat nor drink in his house. There were hams, and ribs of beef, and legs of mutton, and fowls, and turkeys, and corn-cakes and hominy; but whence they came was another thing—a question, however, which none of the visitors ever asked. And there were whisky and Hollands, and brandy in profusion; and whence these came all knew, for few who frequented the house but aided in bringing up a supply of fiery liquid, which sometimes brought more wretched Indians about the place than was agreeable or pleasant.

The platform, when the bridge was crossed, circled round the house on the side of the pool, which it towered over by some thirty feet—a steep and rocky descent of great difficulty, and which never would have been attempted in the face of a resolute enemy. It was, however, here that water was drawn up by a bucket, which hung over the part where the pool was shallow, and showed the golden sand at the bottom bright and sparkling.

On the evening of the day before Amy Moss fell into the hands of the ruthless gang of Shawnees it is that we introduce this place to the notice of our readers. It was a pleasant evening, and the rich tide of sunset fell with deep glow on the mossy walls of the inn, and illumined the face of a girl who stood beside the bridge, looking down with thoughtful mien upon the plain below. She was about nineteen—a tall, handsome girl, of rather bold and decided mien, as if accustomed to rude life and the companionship of rough men, especially those who frequent inns and grow boisterous, maudlin, or ferocious over the demon drink, which, let a man's prejudices be what they may, is an awful master to get complete hold of a man.

She had bright, sparkling eyes and white teeth, which she was rather fond of displaying; and she wore a bodice like a Swiss girl, and short woollen petticoats, and red stockings; the whole neat and jaunty and fascinating—a little jewel, in fact, of a Dutch picture. Her character will better appear from our narrative than from any description.

"Father," said she, suddenly, in a cold voice, as of one who spoke that word from necessity rather than choice, "there is a traveler crossing the dyke."

"Who on airth is it?" replied a thick voice from within.

"Well, I don't know; I think it's Ezram Cook, the peddler-merchant."

"My!" said the other, coming out and shading his eyes with his hands, to catch the figure of the

His eye fell first on the deep foliage of the forest, which could be seen mellowing away into the far distance, golden and sparkling beneath the setting sun; then it came down to where the trunks and roots of the trees were left in deep shade; and then it settled upon the figure of a man moving along steadily on a horse with a small pack.

"Well, it is Ezram Cook, I do declare; he's been up selling and collecting in his money, I expect. Martha! that's one with a mighty good craw coming to supper. So you're a-looking out for him, are you? He won't come here to-night."

This was said in a half-sneering, half-anxious tone, as if the speaker hardly knew how the listener might take it. He was short, thick-set, and powerful in make, but every thing in him was ungainly. He wore a dog-skin cap close over his low forehead, which formed a perfect pent-house over little round gray goggle eyes, that were forever moving restlessly about, as if afraid each instant of Indians, or constables, or some thing terrible—he could hardly, perhaps, say what. He wore a thick beard over chin, face and upper lip, so that little could be detected of expression, save where his thin lips, closed over his projecting teeth, gave a savage and brutal expression which never failed to strike all beholders. He wore a great loose blanket coat, corduroy trousers, and huge, heavy boots made for contending with mud and swamp; and his name was Ralph Regin. He had once been hostler at Scowl Hall, years before, but, detected in a theft, had left it, and never been seen again, until one memorable occasion, hereafter to be described, when the negroes said they saw him lurking about the premises.

A terrible murder had been perpetrated about the time of his disappearance. An inoffensive Dutch settler, with a very pretty wife and child, and possessing, it was well known, considerable wealth, had been murdered near his home down by Wheeling, and his log-house fired, and his wealth, family and furniture destroyed with it. The fire was so tremendous in its effect, that when there came neighbors from the nearest station, it was reduced to a pile of ashes, and was ever after left a memento of a terrible and mysterious tragedy.

"I know better than you," said the girl, after a pause, "that he will not come to-night. His beauty will not be here."

"I reckon not; it ain't likely; the boys ain't up yet, and I don't conclude one or two will like to go down to Crow's Nest. Harrod ain't no chicken, I know. He'll fit."

"Of course he will, and I hope he'll kill the wretches. What does he want with this work? She is to be his wife—"

"Wake snakes and walk chalks, my pretty Kate," said the ugly innkeeper; "not so sure—"

"What mean you?" exclaimed the girl called Kate, clutching his arm.

"Well, don't be so raspy. It seems she don't convene to him just as much as she used; she's kicked once or twice; she don't like to break off, and jist right away, but she's riled him a few. Howsomdever, he knows she don't like him."

"Why, then, will he persecute her? Why will he not give her up? He must be meaner and baser than an Indian."

"You women is so mighty quick. She's rich, and my ain't she beautiful—sich eyes, and sich a skin; she's about the smartest gal in these parts."

"Ralph Regin," said the girl, advancing close to him, "what is the meaning of all this? Why am I tortured thus? Did you not say she never should be his, and that I should be his wife? Speak, I ask you?"

"Don't holla! I ain't deaf; I wish I was. Lor! a catamount's

nothin' to a 'ooman. Well, I did say so, and the mole-eyed varmint shall, *tu*. I've sot him a riddle. S'pose I say s'pose"—and the fellow laughed—"s'pose some few of Injins war to be afore them spekulators, eh?"

"What mean you? Give her up to the bloodthirsty red-skins?"

"You're mighty pertiklar, you are. But they ain't *tos* kill her—not by no means. She'll fetch ten thousand dollars, she will, and no mistake; and I go halves."

"But what is the use of all this? He'll be angry, and that will not serve me."

"Kate, now *du* tell, what on airt makes you like that varmint?" said the other, imploringly.

"Ralph Regin—for I can not and will not call you father—will you ask why the wind shakes yonder trees? Will you tell me why the panther will come to one particular place to clutch his prey, despite all danger? Will you tell me why the bird clings to its mate, and the chicken runs to seek shelter near its mother? I can not—I only know that I love him. He is a bad man—a bold, bad man—but I knew not this at fifteen; and then he said soft words to me, and his eyes looked love, and he smiled, and his voice was gentle, and—and—I loved him. What then that I know he loves another—that he would wed her, and not me? I can not alter it. I hate and love him both. Now love is uppermost; but hate may be one day, and then—"

"What then?" sneered Ralph Regin.

"Never mind; here comes the peddler."

"Hillo! Leave the old hoss in the stable, Mister Ezram; he'll never run up that ladder; thar's no horse-thieves up yar."

The peddler made no reply, but took his horse into a stable at the foot of the rocky stairs, and after a few minutes returned with his bags, pistols, and a somewhat heavy portmanteau, which Ralph assisted him to carry up the steps.

"Evenin', stranger," said Ralph, pretending not to know the peddler, who had never been up there before; "jist in time for supper; come doon country?"

"Well," replied the other, a down-east Yankee, "I *are*; I've been doin' a considerable slick trade; got in the browns mighty well. Sold yep considerable figure *uz* watches and chains; glad to yar supper is ready, 'cause I'm famished and tired."

They had now reached the top of the steps. Kate was looking hard at Ralph Regin, in whose eyes, even in that twilight, she thought she detected a strange expression.

"Give me your bags and let me show you a room," said she, abruptly.

The stranger started as he gazed on one so fair and neat, and his countenance assumed an expression of satisfaction as he followed her. They passed through a room used as kitchen, dining-room and tap-room, went up seven steps to the door of a room which Kate threw open, and in this the traveler deposited his goods. When he had done so, the girl, who was bustling about in rather an angry way, as if this kind of work disgusted her, pulled the key out of the door and gave it to him.

"There are many travelers here sometimes, so keep the key of your room."

The peddler started, but the face of Kate was so calm and careless that he took the key, made no remark, and went down-stairs.

The room was large and airy. A large fireplace, which admitted of benches within its ample dimensions, was occupied by a huge iron pot and a turkey roasting. A woman of about forty, somewhat stout, handsome still but for a wild and savage expression, was preparing the evening meal. A dresser covered by abundance of crockery, a bar filled with colored bottles, a huge table, several chairs and stools, guns, hams sides of

bacon hanging round the walls, with two windows and many doors, completed the scene.

"I guess that smells fine," said the peddler, rubbing his hands.

"What kind o' livin' have you had lately, then?" asked Ralph.

"Nothin' solid or pleasant—birds and dry jerked beef."

"Poorish! Well, it's better farin' yar, so turn to; we're all at home."

All sat down—the woman, who had black hair and eyes, and tawdry finery, and a coral necklace, and a watch, and a dirty lace cap, at the head, Ralph Regin at the end of the table, Kate and the peddler opposite the fire. The supper was plentiful and well cooked. There was liquor in plenty, and the peddler, who was very weary, ate his meal in silence, swallowed a horn of corn-juice, lit his old pipe, and stretched himself on a bench by the fire. Kate helped to clear away, and then sat down also, and took up a book—a strange thing up there, and yet there were many in that house, for Mrs. Regin had been almost a lady once, and had, despite crime and guilt, educated her child up to a certain time. Kate now wanted no assistance, and one who wished to obtain her smile, often brought her such books as he thought would suit her taste.

Presently the peddler-merchant rose, yawned, said he must start "airly," and taking a light, wished all good-night, and went to bed. Kate, who had never turned over a single leaf of her book, and who had been watching every motion and look of the man who called himself her father, also lit a candle and went to bed. Her room was beside that of the peddler, but on a level with the kitchen.

"Now, Martha," said Ralph Regin, in a low, hushed voice, hissed forth from between his teeth, "that peddler's box is full of dollars and watches. He must sleep in the pool."

"No more murter," replied the woman, sinking into a chair, and hiding him from her with her hands.

"Hush! the girl may be listening!"

And Ralph rose, crawled across the room, but stopped as he heard Kate singing merrily at her window.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INDIAN VILLAGE.

WHEN Custaloga left his companion in that wild gully of the woods, he began his journey with all that caution and circumspection for which his race have so long been widely celebrated. His ear drank in every sound, he trod the woods with the lightness of a fawn, his feet scarcely stirred the leaves and twigs which covered the ground, and his arms were so held as to avoid all chance of contact with the trees.

There was something singularly solemn in the aspect of the forest through which the red-man glided noiselessly, stealthily, as a snake does through the tall prairie grass or the thick under-brush. For some time his path led through the thicket that skirted the side of the stream. This, however, he crossed at the first convenient opportunity, and plunged deep into the forest itself. It now became truly a matter of wonder how he guided himself, how he found his way. All was darkness, gloom, and night. There was not a sound to tell that nature was not dead. Not an owl hooted, not a wild beast was heard to roar; and the gentle sighing of trees in the light air that prevailed, was all that told that nature still lived and ruled creation.

But Custaloga moved along with the unerring instinct of a woodman, one of the first features of whose woodcraft was to find his way where no man else could guide himself. When one has become in some degree accustomed to the forest and the prairie, it

is singular with what ease he penetrates in a direct line through wilds where there seems no guide.

But the moss on the trees, the pebbles in the path, the color of the bark, the twinkling of a star, the point of a rock, are indications to the hunter as sure as sign-post or road. As, however, Custaloga proceeded, he slackened his pace, until at last, he paused, looked round, and then seated himself at the foot of a tree. He was now on the summit of a gentle slope, very thickly wooded, but with scarcely any undergrowth of bushes.

Custaloga had rested himself for about five minutes, and had in that time gained breath and considered the course now to be adopted. He began by hiding his rifle behind a tree, whence he could easily snatch it, but where, from several trunks being together, no one could very easily see it in passing.

He then lay flat on his face, his ear to the ground. The change from the stillness of night in that gloomy thicket to what he now heard, was very singular and striking. He seemed quite surrounded by busy life, by some phantasmagorical life, through which he could hear murmuring, whispering, buzzing, but which he could not see. The gentle wind which prevailed came up the slope, and brought with it sounds of warriors gravely talking, of maidens laughing, of women scolding, of dogs growling over a bone—all the usual manifestations, in fact, of Indian life.

"Ugh," muttered Custaloga, whose Wyandot caution had served him well.

Generally speaking, it would have been quite safe for the Indian warrior to have approached the camp of the Shawnees at that advanced hour of the night without many precautions, the Indians not being in the habit of sitting up much after dark. But, on the present occasion, something out of the common doubtless made them more than usually excited, and Custaloga at once made up his mind that it was, as he had expected, to this village Amy had been brought, and that the warriors were telling the stories and narratives of their adventures while smoking their pipes over the camp-fires.

Having gone so far and learned so much, the Wyandot was not a man to retreat without making sure of the fact he was so deeply anxious to know, and by which he intended guiding his future proceedings. Instead, therefore, of retreating when he discovered that the Indians had not retired to the shelter of their wigwams, he merely determined to act with extreme caution and circumspection, clearly, however, showing, that he did not intend to retreat. He now kept nothing on him but the small breech-cloth of the Shawnee warrior on the war-path, fastened his hunting-knife in his belt, tightened the thongs of his moccasins, and began quietly descending the slope toward the village. It was a position and an hour which would have sorely tried the nerves of any, save a borderman or an Indian.

He had advanced a hundred yards before the voices, which had been so plain above when he lay on the ground, became again audible. He now seemed a vision of the night, so solemnly did he stalk on toward the edge of the clearing. In a few minutes he stood as near as was consistent with safety to the Indian village of Wya-na-mah, a kind of outpost of Chillicothe.

A large, natural opening in the forest, where an arid soil or some accident had prevented the thick growth of trees, or which in days gone by had been cleared, had been selected by the Shawnees for their town. About thirty wigwams had been arranged in a semi-circle round an open grass-plot, much worn, however, and stubby; and behind these a rude stockade was visible, which also extended round in front, leaving only two entrances to the village, which were guarded by hungry dogs.

There were two fires on the open plot in the center, round one of which about twenty warriors were collected, while as many women and girls were congregated near the other.

It was a wild and singular scene. Around, the dark and gloomy forest; above, the sky, now illumined by the rising moon; and there, the conical huts of the terrible red-skins lying still and yet marked in the moonlight; and their owners, those grim and ghastly warriors who during that day had wrought so much evil and done so much mischief—mischief never to be forgotten—sitting there like peaceful citizens in their pleasant homesteads, talking, laughing, chattering, thus at eventide, without any of that gravity and solemnity assumed at times for a purpose. It was truly a subject for the pencil of a Murillo or a Claude. And the merry group of girls, and the sedate and sad women, were, with the children, the dogs, and the other little addenda of the scene, singularly picturesque.

Custaloga stood in the deep shadow of the trees, about thirty yards from the fire around which the women were congregated. It was evident, from the stockade being, in some instances, built close up to the trees, which thus could easily have afforded dangerous cover to the lurking foe, that the Indians considered themselves tolerably secure up in Wya-na-mah or that they trusted chiefly to their scouts outlying in the forest.

And Custaloga looked in vain, amid that group of tawny girls and bowed and chastened women, for the form of Amy. His quick and piercing eyes wandered everywhere around the camp, but not a sign of her existence could be seen in any direction, nor of any thing else which that day had been stolen from the Crow's Nest, the property of the Silent Hunter.

Still, from a few words he was able to distinguish, he was satisfied that Amy was concealed in one of the huts; but his determination was so great to be certain of this fact, that, utterly disregarding all ideas of danger, he determined to enter the camp itself before he departed, and satisfy himself upon this point. The manner of Custaloga was not at this instant that of an Indian warrior. He seemed rather one of the children of the pale-faces, so impatient did he appear.

But with a shake of the head he kept down the rising feeling of boyish impatience which had moved him, and stood close to the tree which afforded him shelter—so closely, indeed, that he seemed part and parcel of it. He appeared a statue, not a man; so motionless, so upright, and yet so graceful was his mien.

He listened to the talk of the girls, he heard the guttural tones of the warriors, the bark of the dogs over their bones, and then suddenly he started, despite his self-possession, as a howl resounded through the forest—a wail, a howl of woe, uttered by one long practiced in such screeching. A deathlike pause ensued, the warriors were all silent, the girls laughed no more, as all waited for the explanation of this noise.

A woman came staggering from out a wigwam, her hair disheveled, a tomahawk in her hand, and advanced, still howling and wailing toward the warriors, who rose to receive her with a marked politeness which would have done credit to the most civilized society. Having reached the group, she halted, and was immediately inclosed by the circle of women, who kept at a respectful distance, still near enough to hear distinctly. Custaloga himself felt inclined to advance; but he contented himself with gliding forward to another tree, and then stood still, leaning forward, listening with rapt attention.

"Cosama was a brave—no hunter," she began, "ever made his wigwam warmer, or kept it better supplied with meat—he was never

the fast on the war-path, his cry was always heard on the battlefield; his wife and little ones were happy, for they knew the husband and father was a brave. And where is Cosama now? Is his voice heard at the council-fire to-night? Will his cry ever wake the echoes in the forest again? No. He went forth, on the first day of the moon, to fight the sneaking pale-faces, and yesterday he fell into an ambush, and the great warrior, Cosama the brave, the Quivering Spear, died by the hand of a squaw. Wail! The wigwam of Rice-stalk is empty; no more shall the voice of Cosama bid his woman go fetch the game in the forest; no more shall his boy run to meet him on the edge of the wood, and learn to be a brave at the sound of his voice. Cosama was a brave, but he died by the hand of a squaw. A woman of the pale-faces is in your tent, a pappoose is by her side; they are alive, and Cosama is un-avenged."

Custaloga shuddered, clutched his knife, and drew back for a bound. His eyes glared, his form seemed to swell, and one would have said he was about to do reckless battle with the whole tribe.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PERIL OF A NIGHT.

THE widowed squaw is ever an object of pity among the aborigines, particularly if her husband was a brave and fell on the war-path. But she whose form now stood before the camp like an avenger, with tomahawk upraised and face distorted with passion, was the wife of a favorite, for Cosama had been a noted warrior and looked forward to the day when the tribe should honor him as a chief. Hence the power of the appeal for the slaughter of Amy and the child would prove hard to thwart, as Custaloga only too well knew, and in that instant of peril to the pale-face prisoner the noble savage had gathered his strength as a panther just ready to spring.

But a warrior, moving quickly in her path, arrested her steps, and, seizing the tomahawk from her grasp, left the woman powerless for harm.

"The white girl of the pale-faces is here," said this warrior, placing his hand upon his heart; "her life is very dear. Let the widow of Cosama be still; she shall have other victims to immolate on the grave of her brave before the moon is out. Go! the name of Cosama lives, though his spirit has gone to the Manitou; and we all know he was a brave."

The squaw bowed her head and retired to her solitary tent, to mourn, with her little ones, the death of their only stay. And who shall say, despite their ignorance and benighted state, how much a poor child of the forest mourns the beloved partner of her joys and sorrows, when death has taken him away! He is a rude master and but little of a companion to the red-skin squaw; but the position of husband and wife is one so natively beautiful, that not even the savage modes of wild life can destroy the sacred character of the alliance. We well know how tenderly a wife will mourn for one who during life has not been all he should be; and, in her station and her walk in life, the Rice-stalk had found Cosama a good and affectionate husband.

This interruption ended the watching for that night; the women, girls, and children retired at once to their wigwams, the warriors whispered among themselves an instant, and then, one after another, they glided away to their several homes, and not more than half an hour elapsed ere every thing lay in profound and solemn silence. The dogs even ceased snarling and growling as they gathered round the entrance to the camp.

Custaloga now commenced his dangerous and arduous enterprise. It was one which required much

time and the most acute caution and patience. An Indian sleeps with his ear ready for the slightest strange sound, his hand within reach of all those weapons he knows so well how to use. The young man then trod, with slow and noiseless step, back into the wood, the way that he had come. At the distance of twenty yards he halted and remained perfectly still, listening for about a quarter of an hour. Nothing conveyed an idea to his mind that any of the subtle savages suspected his presence, and were on the watch. He accordingly turned to the left, and advanced in a somewhat circuitous direction, until he believed himself near to that part of the camp where were confined Amy and the child. He then faced the village once more, and advanced with the most stealthy of steps toward the wigwams. In five minutes more he was within a yard of the stockade, which was very rough, but it was six feet high in this particular place, and the danger consisted in its giving way under his weight, and thus by the noise giving the alarm.

A tree stood close to the stockade. It was a tall birch, and its boughs hung over the camp right between two wigwams. By this means Custaloga determined to enter. The boughs were about ten feet from the ground, but this was no great difficulty, and the Indian was soon up amid their branches. Then he tried the large bough which hung over the camp, shook it gently to see if it were sound or rotten, discovered that it would fully bear his weight, and began slowly to crawl along it, until in a few minutes he was right over the spot where he intended to descend.

He listened once more; for now the least error would endanger the success of his enterprise.

Not a sound came from the camp.

He clutched the boughs with both hands, dropped one leg, and prepared to fall. The impulse was momentary; he quietly resumed a crouching position on the boughs, looked back to see what chance there was of regaining the forest, and waited.

An Indian warrior stood about ten yards distant, his face toward him, his ear apparently drinking in every sound, his whole mien and position indicating that he was listening with profound attention. He appeared satisfied at last, gazed vacantly around, and re-entered his wigwam with all the careless manner of one who is perfectly convinced that there is no danger to fear.

Still the young Wyandot waited another quarter of an hour, and then slowly slid off the bough, hung by his two hands, and dropped.

He was in the enemies' camp, and, if discovered, completely in their power.

But despite all his caution, Custaloga knew no fear. His mystery, his serpent-like mode of proceeding, his slow and deliberate mode of action, were meant to insure success, and not solely to save his own life. Had the widowed squaw been allowed to wreak her vengeance on Amy, he would have bounded over the low palisade in front of the camp, and defended the white girl against the whole village with his single arm and knife.

He now stood erect, listening once more. He heard nothing but the hard breathing of the tired warriors, with certain nasal sounds which proclaimed some of them more than usually heavy sleepers. He then moved forward along the wigwam which contained Amy, and looked deliberately in at the door.

A ray of moonlight, piercing through an orifice above the door, fell full on the form of the sleeping girl and child. There she was, her beautiful hair hanging in clusters round her face and shoulders, her face very pale, unnaturally so in the shadows of the moon, her lips parted and moving, her arms en-

circling the happy child that slumbered, all forgetting and dreaming it was by its mother's side, no doubt guarded by the dear arm of her who had loved it so well. A pile of skins formed their bed, while one was partially thrown over them.

Custaloga was almost tempted to enter unceremoniously and awaken her, when he shuddered all over, as he saw lying across the doorway, wrapped in skins, an old woman, who, from her supposed sleeplessness, had been appointed to guard the gentle prisoners. Another consideration restrained him—the fear of waking the child; and then a painful sadness came over him as he reflected on the mortal aversion Amy would be too likely to display on seeing him in his war-paint.

"Why was I born an Indian?" he muttered, as he looked with rapt eyes on the beautiful picture before him.

But he felt that this was a time for action, and that if he would ever gaze on that lovely girl again in life, he must proceed with his duty. He was assured that she was alive and uninjured, while her exact position was a valuable discovery, which would almost insure her liberty if he could leave the camp quite undiscovered. He paused an instant, however, to reflect, and then came to a resolution which he felt in the depths of his heart was wrong, but which he determined to carry out. This was to inform Amy of his presence, and of the efforts made to release her. Creeping, gliding, holding his breath, he went round to the back of the wigwam, where the head of the girl lay, and slowly stooping down began to carry out his plan. He drew his knife, and calmly and deliberately cut a small hole in the side of the hut, which, except the framework, was of skins. He then put his mouth to the orifice.

"Amy," he whispered, close to her ear.

The girl quietly and slowly opened her eyes.

"What is it, Jane?" she said, in a murmuring tone. She thought herself at the Moss, with her sister.

An instant undeceived her.

"Amy," repeated the voice, in a low, timid whisper.

The girl made a sign that she heard, and then slowly and deliberately hummed the child to sleep, as if it had been waking.

The Indian's heart bounded with delight as he noticed this evidence of caution, the result of his own teaching.

"Tis I; Custa. Be easy; friends are near; you have been saved to be the wife of an Indian."

Amy gave such a glance of unmitigated disgust that the poor Wyandot almost fell back with the violence of his emotions.

"Do not refuse him," he continued, in a melancholy whisper; "but ask time. Before you can decide friends will be near."

The grateful smile that crossed the lips of Amy was balm indeed to the young man's heart—he who, when speaking to her, gave up his figurative dialect and made himself a pale-face in his talk.

"Be cautious and hope," he again said.

At this instant the old woman raised her head slowly and cautiously, but not so slowly and cautiously but she was observed, for Amy Moss began again to sing the lullaby which before had hushed the babe to sleep. Custaloga, too, took the hint, and rose with extreme care from his kneeling posture, and prepared to depart. A moving sound within the hut made him start, and retreating rapidly, he lay flat on the ground close to the palisade, just as the old woman appeared behind the wigwam and peered about.

She saw nothing, however, and, muttering about love-struck fools wandering round the hut of the pale-faced girl, she returned to her rest.

Custaloga gave her time to fall again into a soothing sleep, and then rose to depart. But it appeared he had stayed too long,

and that his departure was not to take place so easily as he originally expected.

A truit in Indian courtship, which at any other time might very much have amused him, was now destined to make his position one of almost hopeless difficulty.

The young warriors of the tribe, when seeking the hand of a young girl in marriage, will rarely, if ever, manifest their affection openly, or converse even with the object of their love in the presence of others. Stolen interviews are then the only opportunities given to the lover who would whisper soft nothings in a woman's ear. These generally take place at eventide, when the girl goes down to the spring to fetch water, or pretends to do so, which is much the same thing.

When, however, this opportunity does not offer, or when the young warrior has been absent some time, he seeks an interview under the circumstances detailed in our narrative.

Custaloga distinctly saw a young warrior, about nineteen, tall and powerful beyond the usual ratio of Indians, come forth from a wigwam to his left, and advance toward the slumbering fire with a slow and measured step, not as if he sought to hide his movements, but the emotions which guided his actions. He halted beside the embers, stooped and picked up a small stick, lighted at one end, which he placed between his fingers, so that the hot coal was, as it were, in the palm of his hand.

He then deliberately advanced toward a large family wigwam, where slept a father and mother and several grown-up daughters, and entered about a yard within the doorway. He then stooped, and by the aid of the bit of lighted wood selected the precise spot where lay the object of his affections. He then held the wood in the palm of his hand and blew it gently, so as by its lurid light to show his face to the maiden of his heart.

He then rose, speech being unnecessary, and came with the usual dignified walk into the open air, re-approached the fire, and sat down upon a log, smoking his pipe. In a few minutes the Indian maiden came tripping lightly along the ground, and took her seat beside the young warrior, who, after a short time given to masculine solemnity, yielded to the still small voice of nature, and began chatting and whispering like any other lover in any other part of the world. He whispered and she giggled, he pressed her to fix the happy day, and she said something merrily sarcastic about his not yet having earned the right to have a wife; and so the time passed mirthfully, swiftly to them, and there seemed little chance of their leaving off their interview until morning dawned.

Slowly, indeed, did the hours pass to Custaloga, who at first imagined that the amorous conference would last but a few minutes. He soon saw, however, that the affectionate pair would laugh and giggle until the rosy sun came bursting forth to chase the gray dawn away, when he would be fatally a prisoner, and all he had learned at so much risk hopelessly lost.

He knew, likewise, that his presence might seal the fate of the girl and child, and bring about, in fact, catastrophes of the worst character.

To return the way he had come was hopeless.

To attempt to cross the camp unobserved was equally futile.

To crawl behind the wigwams, and when at the last one to make a dart for the gate of the village, was to bring the whole party of yelping red-skins screaming and hallooing at his heels, when the affair would become one simply of swiftness and rapidity of movement.

Custaloga determined, therefore, to try a plan which, from its combined boldness and simplicity,

promised success. It was, indeed, the only one likely to give him a fair start.

Adopting the careless, slouching gait of a warrior, who wanders about simply because he can not sleep, he left the huts as if, indeed, he had come from one of them, and walked along the path which, leading from the central hut, passed between the two fires and led to the gate. He turned neither to the right nor the left, but his keen perception, and a slight glance from the corner of his eye, as it were, told him he was discovered. The pair, however, exhibited as yet no suspicion, though their confidential intercourse ceased, and they gazed at the intruder with curiosity and wonder.

It was unusual for a warrior, at that hour of the night, to go forth, except on the war-path with fusée and tomahawk, without his blanket on his shoulders. This struck Custaloga about the same instant that it struck the youthful warrior, who, however, unwilling at his age to alarm the camp without being sure of what he was about, simply rose, motioning the girl to wait for him, and began moving in the same direction as the Wyandot.

"Is one of our camp ill, or do evil dreams trouble my brother, that he goes out to cast them forth in the woods?"

Custaloga made no reply, moving onward, his head on his breast, as it were, but feeling he was discovered.

The Indian bounded forward and posted himself exactly in front of him.

"Speak! My brother is a stranger. Why does he leave the wigwams of the Shawnee? Surely my brother will not walk in the woods without his blanket?"

"I am Custaloga, of the eagle eye," replied the Wyandot, raising his head.

"Ugh!" said the Shawnee, who well knew the reputation of the other as a huntsman and a shot.

They looked at each other; they had once been friends as boys, Custaloga having passed many months with the Shawnees in better times.

"Come to the wigwam of Tecumseh," said the young Indian, courteously.

"Custaloga is in a hurry, and must go," replied the Wyandot, coldly.

"Why does my brother visit his old friends like a wolf, in the night, and creep away before the morning shows the color of his skin? And why is my brother in his war-paint?"

"Because the Shawnees are dogs—base, cowardly dogs—and kill women, and slay little children," thundered Custaloga. "Go out of my way; a squaw yesterday killed one of your best men; go—the pale-faces will make rods and whip the Shawnee braves."

With these words he darted forward, caught the astounded red-skin with his two hands, dashed him with force to the earth, and darted up the slope where his rifle lay concealed.

"Ugh!" said the Indian, rising, while the girl slipped away in the confusion.

By this time a dozen armed young men were round the discomfited warrior, who, pointing in the direction of the fugitive, remained to give an explanation to the rest of the tribe of what had passed. The hut where Amy was confined was first examined, and she being seen to be quite safe, the story of the amorous lad was listened to. Deep exclamations of surprise burst from all at the audacity of Custaloga, whose friendship for certain of the whites was well known. None doubted the connection between the Wyandot's journey and the capture of Amy, whose presence, they felt, was discovered.

Wild was the fury of the warriors at the fact that so bold an enemy had been in their camp and braved them all, alone and unarmed. All hoped that the dozen or more warriors who had started

to capture him would succeed, and that their feelings of vengeance and baffled cunning would then be gratified by one of those fearful trials of courage and constancy which we shall have to describe fully, in connection with one or more of our heroes.

Their rage was doubled, and many times redoubled, when they, in the morning, saw all the signs of what Custaloga had done. They traced him to the first tree whence he had watched all their proceedings; they followed him to the one he had climbed, and gave a cry of admiration, and unbounded and ungovernable passion, when they saw with what cool audacity he had entered the camp. They raged like furies rather than men, and were only prevented by the avowed affection of a young chief from wreaking instant vengeance on their beautiful prisoner, who, though conscious that Custaloga had something to do with the disturbances of the night, had every reason to believe that he had escaped.

She missed several warriors, it is true, and believed they were chasing the bold and fearless young Wyandot; but she had much faith in his knowledge of the country, and in that swiftness of foot for which he was so remarkable. Besides, events occurred of such personal interest to herself, that she had no leisure to think of any thing else. One or two of the scouts, however, came in about midday, having given up the chase, and about two hours later two others came in; but their triumphant shouts, and the evident delight with which they were greeted, showed that they brought in a prisoner of no uncommon importance.

Amy Moss felt sick at heart and ready to faint, and before she went forth to see who it was, prayed to God for that courage and constancy she stood so much in need of under the painful circumstances in which she was placed—circumstances which were now doubly melancholy.

She was much disturbed, as she prayed, by the fiendish shouts of the Indians, the shrill cries of the women, and the monotonous howl of the bereaved widow, who seemed now to see a prospect of vengeance. Unable to restrain her impatience any longer, she snatched up the poor child and went forth into the open air to see what was passing.

CHAPTER IX.

THWARTED.

SATISFIED that, as far as the girl was concerned, all was right, Ralph Regin returned to the fire-side, filled himself a stiff glass of that potent corn-juice which has driven more men to crime and falsehood, and treachery and death, than even the smile of the falsest woman, relit his pipe, and looked sternly at the unfortunate Dutch woman, who in that house answered to the name of Mrs. Ralph Regin.

"Martha," said he, slowly—"none of your nonsense."

"What!" replied the woman, clasping her hands, "will you no spare dis man?"

"Martha, no more words. It is pretty considerable slick, I must say, for you to play the virtuous"—he could speak like a backwoodsman or a plain Englishman at will—"you—you! who helped me to burn your first husband's house—"

"Dis from you, Ralph?" said the woman, clasping her hands.

"No never have I deserve dis! I love you—I always did love you! I no kill him—I let you do it! I am ashamed to pray; my head is full of vicked *tants*—but I no kill him!"

"Bother!" said the ruffianly innkeeper; "you knew I was bound to kill him."

"Ralph, no more ov dis; silence—I am your slave, but do not insult me."

Ralph paid no further attention to the woman for some time. He was wrapped in his own thoughts.

We gladly seize this opportunity of abandoning the company of one so degraded and vile, with whom we shall sojourn as little as possible, as such company is not to our taste.

When Kate knew, from the retreating footsteps of Ralph Regin, that to listen was again safe—for she had listened already—she crept slowly to her door, and having bolted it on the inside, she applied her ear to the keyhole. Having heard all that was sufficient for her purpose, she began her operations in a way that would have both surprised and astonished the wretched landlord. She fastened her door on the inside, so that it could not easily be opened, and then she climbed upon her own bed and listened. She could easily hear the breathing of the sleeper who lay in the room, which was not above, but a little more than half-way up her bed-chamber.

The apartment was formed by boards, which had been rudely knocked together with a few nails. One of these, with a pair of strong scissors, she proceeded to remove. At the end of a quarter of an hour, she had succeeded. She listened again, but there was dead silence in the kitchen, and the sleeper still slept heavily.

"Wake up, man!" she hissed, in his ear—"wake up, and make no noise."

"Eh! my! who is there?" mumbled the peddler-merchant, half asleep.

"Hush—no noise! You are but a poor traveler in the wilderness, to talk of watches and silver dollars up in the Frog-hole! Rise, dress, and prepare to fight or make your escape, which you please."

"My gracious—well I never did—no. If it's all the same to *you*, my dear, I'll absquatulate," said the peddler, who trembled violently.

"Be cautious, then, and quick; you can pass through this opening—my window is level with the ground—"

"You ayre the gal called Kate. In no case made and provided did such an uncommon occurrence occur to me—I war so tired, and that saddle ayre so hard. My! my! goody gracious!"

With these words the peddler passed his saddlebags through the aperture, then the portmanteau, then himself. All was done with rapidity, and yet without noise. Just as they finished, however, they heard a rattling at his door, and then Ralph Regin came down stairs.

"The 'cute rascal," muttered the innkeeper, "he's bolted his door. We must try the window just now, when the gal's quite asleep."

Kate placed her fingers on her lips, opened her window gently, passed out herself, handed the baggage to the peddler, pushed her window back, and then led him with stealthy and cautious step along the terrace. In an instant more they were on the summit of the steps.

Beneath the moon it was a lovely scene—one of those scenes which, to a soul not utterly dead, must speak of God and His bounty. There was music in the trees; there was moonlight on the waters; the cascade fell in harmony; the wind sighed with a tone of love—all was beautiful but the bad heart of sinful man, who, having once broken the law and Heaven's commandment, more sacred than all laws, never knows where to stop. It is *not* wonderful that more terrible crimes occur in the lanes and alleys of drink-haunted cities than beneath the forest glade; but it is wonderful that in the sight of His most charming handiwork, the heart of man can awaken to crime at all.

"Quick, and no words; lead your horse awhile, until the hoofs will not sound. Go, and Heaven go with you—"

"Gal, will you have a watch now?" said the really grateful peddler.

"No—go!" repeated the girl. The peddler rapidly descended

the steps, reached the stable, saddled his unwilling horse, and led him forth along the path that skirted the pool. Kate stood on the summit of the steps, watching his progress. She appeared like the dew-drop on the rose in that purple-tinted building, shedding sweet influence on the dark soul of crime.

Suddenly the door opened, and Ralph Regin came out. He started on seeing Kate; but he was not surprised, as such conduct was common with that wayward girl. He advanced close beside her. She felt his presence, though she did not see him.

"Eh, gal! I reckon you're mighty fond of moonlight. What are you looking a'ter, eh?"

"I am listening," said she, turning round and facing him, "for the sound of the peddler's footsteps, to feel sure that he is safe away."

"What mean you, gal?" exclaimed Ralph, nervously.

"I mean, Ralph Regin, that I told the peddler it was not good to sleep in the Frog's Hole with watches and dollars in his pouch; and he believed me, and went."

A fierce cloud of wild and reckless passion passed over the ruffian's face, as he felt for his dagger or clasp-knife—bowie-knives were not invented—and he muttered one of those frightful words which burst forth from the lips of the wicked or the sottish fool. But he seemed to remember something, and turned away with a leer.

"I guess you're a mighty clever girl. I'm off, though, *tu* bed, as the night is considerable cold; you'd better go too."

Kate made no reply, but returned to her room the way she came; and half an hour later the inhabitants were, to all appearance, fast asleep. At the time nothing further passed between Kate and Ralph Regin in reference to the attempted murder of the peddler-merchant.

Many a terrible crime in this checkered world has been prevented by such quiet, unobtrusive interference on the part of a woman. Who shall say that on this earth they are not our good angels, leading us, when we listen to their musical voices, to peace and honor and greatness, truth and hope and love? The advice of a man may be interested; the advice of a real woman is always earnest and true.

One murder less stained the wide world that night, because a woman was quick to resolve and bold to execute.

CHAPTER X.

THE RACE FOR LIFE.

WHEN Custaloga started to run for the woods, his first thought was to obtain possession of his rifle, and thus secure for himself an arm with which he could contend against the force certain to be sent after him. He knew too well the character of the enemy he had to deal with, to doubt that every exertion would be made to capture or slay one who had acted the cool and audacious part which he had played, in entering a camp of warriors, and escaping thence openly and unharmed.

His teeth set, his ear ready to catch every sound, making leaps worthy of the deer or roebuck, on he went, no longer attempting to conceal his presence, but casting every chance and hope upon his own swiftness of foot and knowledge of the country. But they, too, were swift behind him, and he heard them scattering away to the right and left, shouting, yelling, and encouraging each other. But what affected him most was the tramping sound of steps in his rear. On they came, and he heard them distinctly, and knew, too, that they were swift of foot, and likely to run him down, and bring things to the issue of the gun in a very short space of time.

And what is that above those trees there, where a low gap is seen in the east? It is the first streak of early dawn, which is

about to flood the whole scene with light and life.

And there stands his rifle and his pouch behind that tree, now not ten yards in advance. It is loaded, and the pan well guarded by the covering of oilskin, which every thoughtful and experienced hunter takes care shall be always ready for the emergencies of the woods—damp and rain, and swimming rivers in the face of howling and yelling enemies.

Custaloga had been running uphill at a pace which was perfectly frightful, but he began to slacken by degrees as he neared the spot where he must halt an instant. He looked back. There were none in sight, though still he could hear the shouts to the right and left, while in his rear, following his trail, which they could with their keen eyes just begin to see, came the light footfall of the moccasined Indians as they hurried up the ascent.

He took all his accouterments, he put them on, he clutched his rifle, and drew a long breath preparatory to falling into a trot along the old trail, down the side of the gentle acclivity. At this instant the bushes shook violently about fifteen yards behind, and then an Indian came bounding through the thicket with a cry, a shout, a yell, which startled Custaloga, so near was it. At first he did not see Custaloga. The gray light made all objects very indistinct. But he was the best runner in the camp, and the young warrior felt that such a chance of diminishing the number of his enemies was not to be thrown away.

They were almost face to face in an instant. The Shawnee drew up and cast his eyes around for a cover. A large tree was close to his left hand. He caught it as he seemed about to pass, and tried to whirl himself below it. The rifle of Custaloga now spoke, and the swift runner fell backward with a cry of anguish and hallooed fury, which was re-echoed by so many voices, in such close proximity, that Custaloga did not even wait to load ere he again darted off beneath the friendly cover of the tall forest trees, which began to be clear in the morning light—the oak waving its deep-green leaves, the silver beech shining in the first rays, and everywhere the tuneful birds singing their matin songs, regardless of the horrid strife which woke the echoes of the forest with cries so hideous and deeds so bloody.

The birds caroled on every tree, sending back wild sounds of forest music from a thousand throats to herald that still thrill—half sound, half sense—which accompanies the dawn of day, where huge timber covers the ground, and peculiar breezes characterize day and night.

Custaloga bounded through the wood, regardless of sky above, of earth beneath, his whole soul for the moment directed to the one great object—his life. On his coolness, courage, and discretion, now depended his very existence. Many were the plans, strange the devices, that passed through his brain as he hurried along; but as yet no opportunity was afforded of putting any of them into practice.

After the first yell of rage and fury which announced the finding of the body of the swift runner, and after the cry of triumph and joy which followed on the more pleasant discovery that his scalp was untouched, the Indians gave forth no sound. Custaloga listened in vain, his practiced senses could detect nothing which could now afford him any clue to the mode of proceeding adopted by his enemies. That they would not give up the chase so easily, that they would seek to avenge the insult they had received and the death of the young warrior, were facts with which one so familiar with Indian usages was well acquainted.

But all was still and silent. Not a sound indicating the presence of man could be heard anywhere.

Custaloga was awe-struck a moment by the sudden stillness. He paused, he stooped, he touched the ground with his ear. Up he bounded, a smile of defiance on his face. He had clearly heard them, the whole wild and savage troop, coming madly up, but without a word, or cry, or yell, to betray their presence. The pursued man now realized that all depended on the swiftness of his feet. He could not hope to do battle with so large a party.

His plan was to run until he could find some cover, where he might be concealed awhile, and until the Indians gave up the chase. He also knew that if he approached within a certain distance of the settlements, the Shawnees would, now that their intention was betrayed, undoubtedly beat a retreat, lest he should give the alarm and bring the whole mass of the whites down upon them.

He did not make for the gully, as he first intended. He did not think it according to the received notion of border and forest warfare to betray a *cache* to the enemy, under any circumstances; while at the same time it was matter of great importance in the interest of Amy not to be closed up for any number of days in a place where the Indians could keep them in a state of siege, and perhaps finally reduce them by the mere force of starvation.

He made, therefore, for the river Scioto, at a place which he was familiar with, and on the other side of which was a *cache* of his own, which he had reason to believe he might gain without betraying it to the Indians. He was guided only by the light and the wind. The wood was close and tangled, and every now and then he had to make *detours*, which materially lengthened his journey. But as yet he felt no fatigue. The hunter in the American wilds, who has had any experience and practice, learns to go days without food at particular junctures; to be without fire in the cold and wet, rather than betray a hiding-place; to endure thirst, that worst of physical sufferings: Custaloga could do all this, and more.

On they came like bloodhounds, thirsting for his blood, and with the advantage of some hours of rest, as well as having a most intimate knowledge of the country they traveled.

Presently an "opening" lay before him. It was a quarter of a mile across—a marshy, swampy pool rather than a prairie. He was well acquainted with the trail through the middle of the morass, and had gone half-way, when his pursuers burst upon the open space—first one, then another, then two more, until the whole band were in full view. Custaloga turned and leveled his rifle. Its range was known to be tremendous, and the whole party instinctively drew up. Custaloga merely gave a loud laugh and bounded at his most rapid rate along the narrow and beaten pathway, a pathway used by both man and beast for ages.

Just then it turned and took a curve which brought Custaloga within gunshot of the Indians. He was for an instant actually running toward them. They fired; but either the distance was a little too great, or their aim too rapid—for Custaloga bounded into the air with a loud yell of defiance and continued on his way.

In another moment he had entered the arches of the forest, leaving the discomfited Indians in doubt as to whether he was continuing on his way, or lying in ambush. They, however, soon decided this. A short conference was held, and then a young brave, as was very commonly the case, devoted himself for the whole party. He clutched his rifle, cast a wild glance at the dark and mysterious woods before him, then made a dart toward the cover at a pace and with bounds which Dick Harvey would have certainly described as "consisting of strides of nine and a half feet to the lay."

The other Indians came behind, ready to rush, if Custaloga fired, before he could again load.

But no crack of rifle or gun came from the forest to rouse the echoes, and away burst the Shawnees once more, panting, leaping, and yelling like a pack of murderous wolf-hounds.

Custaloga, taking advantage of their hesitation, was moving along the trail, which he now perseveringly followed, at a more leisurely pace. Though he did not care for it, and scarcely allowed himself to feel that he was affected by it, he did feel slightly faint for want of food. He knew that he had at least an hour more before him, along such paths, ere he could hope to reach that *cache* where, from long experience, he judged himself to be able to defy Indian ingenuity and patience.

The wood, however, now began to be more open and clear, and presently Custaloga caught a glimpse of the river through the trees. This made his heart leap with delight, as a good swim would brace his nerves; and, should he gain the opposite bank in time, he might keep the whole party of Shawnees at bay.

He could never explain to himself how it was—except that his eyes must have been slightly dimmed by faintness and fatigue for a moment—but he now made one of those mistakes, slight, trifling mistakes, which a novice would make at every instant, and that have so often proved fatal during a running fight. He was about to strike the river fifty feet above the ford, by which alone it was safe to cross; the current being too swift and strong above and below the spot.

At a glance he discovered his error. For an instant he was stunned, and then away he went toward the right place, fully aware that on a minute or so of time now hung his life. The Indians had made up their minds that he would cross at this particular spot, and the great majority of the warriors had determined, if he succeeded in passing this ford, to give up the chase, as the opposite bank was dangerous, and their presence would probably be imperatively needed in the camp.

Custaloga never bounded with such deer-like leaps before; his eyes were starting from his head, his whole form bathed in perspiration—which made the river seem death, as it would have been to many; but not to those hardy children of nature. On he went—the ford is ten feet from him, he wildly raises his rifle, as from the forest bound forth the Shawnees, some from one quarter, some from another, some near, some at a distance. Nearly all fired, and Custaloga fell flat upon his face.

Wild was the yell of delight, loud it rung in the air, waking the echoes of the forest, as they rushed on, without reloading, to secure their prisoner or scalp their victim. But louder still was the laugh of scorn with which Custaloga rolled down the bank, and plunged into the river. The Indians had been tricked—they saw it at a glance; and all except three or four turned on their heels and took their way back toward their village.

They would be welcomed, they knew, by the laugh of the women, while the widow of the swift runner would be privileged to insult them for several days. But the chase seemed likely to be endless, and from the manner of Custaloga they feared being drawn into an ambush.

Custaloga, having slung his rifle on his shoulders, was swimming vigorously across the Scioto river, which, at the ford, was considerably wider than usual. Just as he gained the swiftest and deepest part, he cast his eyes backward and saw that, while one Indian was swimming after him, the two others on the bank were loading. Presently one leveled his gun and took deliberate aim.

"Wagh!" exclaimed Custaloga, involuntarily, as he seemed to feel the bullet in his body.

At the same instant the other fired, and Custaloga dived. The bold experiment was successful, as far as avoiding the shot was concerned; but the fugitive rose before the ford, and was swept down the stream by the force of the current. Not a word escaped his lips; his teeth were compressed, his brow darkened, and a thought of Amy flashed across his mind, with some other thoughts vague and undefined; then he struck out manfully for the opposite shore, and, to his great delight, soon touched ground with his feet.

His first thought was to examine the position of his enemies. The Indian in the water had gained the middle of the stream, and was striving to reach the bank on the eastern side of the Scioto, while the others were also preparing to cross, as if now certain of their prey. The fact is, that they believed him seriously wounded, and sure to be captured or killed.

Custaloga, hastily drying the pan of the lock of his gun, loaded and took aim at the foremost of his enemies. A loud cry from the Shawnees on the shore warned the Indian of his danger. But the crack of a rifle and a wild cry were heard simultaneously, and the Indian waved his arms on high, dropped his gun, and was carried away by the stream. Custaloga looked vacantly at the body as it came on—the Indian was on his back floating—while the Shawnees watched the result with intense interest. Custaloga had none of the bloodthirsty instincts of his race left. He was not capable of killing even an inimical savage, thirsting for his life, unnecessarily. He clearly saw that the one before him was beyond doing him any harm, and he wished to draw him to the shore and there leave him to die or recover, as Providence ordained. The Shawnees, naturally enough, mistook the motive with which he pushed out the stock of his gun to arrest the body as it passed. A low, melancholy yell, proclaimed that they expected every moment to see their wounded warrior scalped.

The Indian who came floating down the river was carried by the current toward the place where Custaloga stood. His face was turned toward our hero with a look of grim defiance, for little did the savage know the humane intentions of the Wyandot.

Custaloga stood ready; the gun was pushed out, the body was touched by it, and came floating slowly in. The wounded Indian suddenly gave a low cry, struck out with his feet, and thrust the gun from him with the left hand, thus impelling himself into the current, which carried him away toward the rapids, where a still more cruel death awaited him.

The Indian had not made these exertions to save his life, but to be spared the dishonor of losing his scalp-lock.

"Ugh!" said Custaloga, with unfeigned admiration; "brave warrior!"

But, while regretting the mistake of the Shawnee, who had eluded him to seek the rapids and the falls below, Custaloga had concerns of too much moment hanging over him to waste any further time on one of those deadly enemies, who would so ruthlessly have taken his life.

A loud cry of triumph, a proud and long re-echoed yell, from the other bank, roused him to action. The two Indians were upon him, if he did not act with vigor.

He now found himself even more helpless than he could ever have supposed. He was in the act of loading when the body of the Shawnee had nearly reached him. He threw out his hand mechanically, and as he did so, his powder-horn was reversed, and every atom cast into the stream. Custaloga, however, was not a man to be discouraged by this mischance; he darted out for the bank, caught a bush in his hands, clambered up, and still holding his now useless gun in his hand, made his way into the forest on the other side, and

lay down an instant to rest. He was really exhausted with the long and violent race.

At the end of about ten minutes he rose, and looking round, selected a well-known leaf that had often refreshed him under similar circumstances, chewed it, and moved leisurely along toward his cache, where he proposed to replenish his stock of powder.

The day was considerably advanced, and Custaloga was exceedingly uneasy at what his companions might do in his absence. He knew Dick Harvey to be risky and impetuous, and he did not fancy that, in any enterprise requiring audacity, the SILENT HUNTER would be much behindhand; still, he did not like to show himself in the Devil's Gully totally unprovided with ammunition.

The sun came down with great force upon the water and the shore, so that Custaloga was glad to avail himself of the shelter of the forest skirt.

Presently he reached the summit of a hill, and looked down upon a scene of considerable beauty. It was a low, fertile bottom, about a mile across, with a small stream running through the midst, and huge trees covering the rich soil of the valley. They were vast old trees, some of them—trees older than the oldest man in the land, older than the era of the peopling of America by the whites. A row of them stood before him, and, tutored as he was in books and poetry, the young, half-naked savage gazed at them for an instant with pleasure.

Their gnarled, knagged, and crinkled roots were in all cases high out of the ground, and in one instance left a natural-grown cavern beneath, where doubtless many a bear had nestled with her young, and many a panther devoured its prey. Their vast limbs, their gigantic boughs, rose, it seemed, when standing at their feet, to the very clouds, and their shadow was wide and long. One, a very aged tree, the tree of many days—was stricken unto death, and yet it was still the sustainer of life. Creeping things, garlands of boughs and leaves, whole "piles" of moss, hung down, dark and funereal.

Many a snake and lizard, many a mouse and rat, many a toad, and many a frog, did Custaloga rouse as he advanced swishing before him with a stick he had picked up.

But it was not for this he cared. What he looked out for was the bear, which prowled in that marshy place, and which on occasion had afforded to himself and others such glorious sport. But now a bear would have been an awkward customer to deal with—though even now not too much for a man to venture on—and Custaloga looked warily around, as he advanced, expecting every moment to see one of these awkward animals rise up and confront him.

He smiled grimly as he thought of all Dick Harvey would have said had he known that Custaloga was in Big Brake Dell without powder, and all "through a tryin' to save one of them cursed Injines. It are a dark hole anyhow—but no powder to flash!—I expect then it takes two men to see a b'ar."

The ground was so tangled and difficult with vines and creeping plants, that Custaloga proceeded but slowly. His ear, however, drank in every sound, and read every sign and feature of the woods. In a few minutes more he came in sight of the stream.

It was a narrow and sluggish bayou, of an exceedingly dangerous character to novices in the Big Brake Dell. In almost every part it was so overgrown with bushes, creeping parasites, vines and plants, that any one might have walked on, unconscious of the presence of water, and fallen in, in which case destruction was all but certain, the narrow stream of water being deep. It was down in this cool and marshy place, where for ages the sun had never peered, that the bears must have found rich hiding-places, and made meals of snails and other creeping things.

Custaloga had stepped out from the thick cover of the forest, and was about to seek the bridge which was invariably used by all who knew the place, when, as he came in sight of the bridge itself, he saw two Indians—the men he thought in his rear, but who had come down and intercepted him at the only place where for miles he could traverse the Dell—preparing to cross the bridge themselves. One was close to it, the other about ten yards in his rear.

Custaloga knew that he was not seen, and was preparing once more to run before his enemies, when his senses of sight and hearing were arrested by a scene of startling novelty.

The bridge over the Dell bayou was formed by a huge tree that had fallen across, and from which the passing hunters, both white and red, had lopped occasionally such branches as were inconvenient to their passage. The tree forked about the middle of the stream, and a bough stood up apparently still green, though the verdure was purely parasitical, the foliage falling thickly around from a height of about ten feet.

The Indian was on the tree—astride, and pulling himself on slowly, the bough being narrow and too ill-shaped to be walked on, except at a run, and under pressing circumstances. The Shawnee had slung his rifle, and on reaching the ford, was in the act of raising himself up, when he leaped to his feet, and made a spring to the bank whence he came.

A roar, a growl that would have shaken the nerves of even many an ordinary sportsman, at once explained the red-skin's terror. A bear was concealed under the dense foliage, whence he lazily poked his head. It was a huge animal, though not an active one.

"Wagh!" said the second Indian, leveling his gun.

But he did not fire, retreating instead toward the trees, in which he was imitated by the first. The animal turned back, and showed every inclination to decline any contest; but this in no way suited the ideas of the Indians, who, proud always of killing a bear, saw in this some compensation for their disappointment with regard to the Wyandot.

Having gained a cover they both fired. The bear turned with an angry growl indeed, for both balls had hit him, though he was only slightly wounded. Custaloga could not resist the impulse of early education. The Indians were loading; he had nothing to fear. He appeared suddenly from behind his cover, and waved his hands to the Shawnees, who, however, continued loading.

"Ha! ha!" he shouted, "the Shawnees are dogs. Look—a Wyandot sends his black brother to fight for him! Go—two Shawnees can only fight one bear. Custaloga will leave them."

And he dived into the forest, laughing heartily to himself, at the singular event which had freed him from the attack of two armed Indians, with whom he would have found it difficult to cope, without powder to load his gun.

As the bear made a spring toward the Shawnees, the flying man began moving rapidly down the bayou toward the only other place where it was fordable, and that was the mouth.

As he neared the Scioto, the characteristics of the Big Brake Dell departed; the trees became small, the soil became dry, until the dull stream flowed at last over a wide and shallow expanse of gravel, through which Custaloga easily waded.

Here we must leave him, and return to the block-house, where at that hour events were occurring of deep importance to this eventful history of a time and place which saw more tragedies in a single week—domestic in their character, it is true—than many a European country in a year—tragedies which fully explain the hatred of Americans for the red-skins.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WOUNDED WARRIOR.

CUSTALOGA no longer looked with much anxiety to his position with respect to the Indians, but was overwhelmed with grief and dread with regard to Amy, whose long residence in the camp of the Shawnees awakened grave apprehensions. He knew that her beauty and youth would probably secure her against any immediate peril of life; but they were sure to expose her to other dangers, which the young man regarded with much more fear. For her to become the wife of a Shawnee was too horrible an idea for him to dwell on. He was, however, so utterly exhausted with the events of the night that he was hardly able to move with the vigor and strength necessary. He hesitated one moment as to what he should do first, and the impulse of nature was so strong that he felt almost inclined to lie down. But this was perilous, so he sped onward, still intent upon visiting the private cache before referred to ere he went to that of the Silent Hunter and Dick Harvey, who were doubtless waiting for him with extreme anxiety.

He kept at a little distance from the bank of the river, which was overgrown by matted bushes and trees, his eye still glancing uneasily as he went, his foot treading lightly on the ground, until he came to a place where there was a small open space on the bank, near the rocky mouth of a little stream. Here a number of logs had collected and formed a drift.

Custaloga was about to descend to the edge of the stream and drink, when his attention was directed to an object moving in the water, which was seeking to climb upon the logs. As he gazed on the object, he distinctly saw a tall Indian slowly and laboriously creep out of the water, now slipping back, now half succeeding, until at last he got a good hold and sat upon the drift-logs, naked and unarmed. It was a Shawnee, one of those he had shot in the contest at dawn, badly wounded and unable to defend himself. He had lost his gun, and had apparently drifted down the stream on a log of wood. He sat a picture of desolation and misery, dying from loss of blood on that cold place where he had crawled to expend his last breath.

Most bordermen or Indians would have shot him, but Custaloga never shed blood unnecessarily. What should he do?

His generous nature soon decided this question, and heat once began to put his plan in execution. He laid his rifle, knife, and ax on the bank, and then, the warrior's back being to him, he slowly and quietly moved toward the place where the Shawnee was busily engaged in stanching the blood that flowed freely from his two wounds, one in his knee, the other on his shoulder. So stealthily, serpent-like, and cautious was the step of Custaloga, that he reached to within two yards of the Indian quite undiscovered. Then the keen senses of the Shawnee warrior were awakened, and he tried to rise. His head was half-turned round, and he saw Custaloga. He turned, as if to plunge into the stream; but he felt it was impossible, and then moved his head to receive the last disgusting office with due and warrior-like submission.

"My brother is wounded; he is like the old oak which has been chopped by the ax of the white man—it totters, but it does not fall for many moons; my brother will live," said Custaloga, placing his hand upon his heart.

"Ugh!" replied the astounded Shawnee, "Custa—young head, old heart."

"Warrior," said Custa, gravely, "your tribe has stolen away my friend—Amy Moss, the singing bird of the Scioto—and there is no hatchet buried between your tribe and me, until the singing-bird is at home in its nest. But Custaloga has believed in the white man's God, and he will not slay an unarmed enemy. Come."

"The sap has flown from the tree, and the tree will fall—there is no blood in the veins of Hochela—he cannot walk—leave him to die—the vultures will bury him," replied Hochela, gravely, yet mournfully.

"No! Hochela is not dead," said Custaloga, drawing torn linen from his pouch, with which, kneeling down, he firmly bound the wounds, after fetching some cooling herbs from the bank.

He then assisted the wounded Indian to the shore and seated him comfortably.

"Hochela!" exclaimed Custaloga, solemnly, "Custa will save his brother's life—but will Hochela's tongue never speak to show the *cache* of Custaloga?"

The wounded man placed his hand upon his heart, and, his wild and savage nature utterly subdued by pain, suffering, and loss of blood, he looked at the young warrior with so gentle and earnest a physiognomy, that Custaloga hesitated no longer.

"Come, then," said the young Indian, taking him on his shoulder.

With this singular burden he did not advance more than two hundred yards along the shore before he reached a wild and rocky little eminence overgrown with trees, creeping things, and brush. Entering within his, he placed the Indian on the ground and returned to fetch his arms. Then pushing aside some bushes, a small, dark hole was revealed—a kind of passage, along which Custaloga was compelled to pull the Indian. The passage was about ten feet long. It then widened a little just over the mouth of a well of considerable depth, with a dry, hard, sandy bottom. A pole-ladder gave access to the depths below. This contrivance was very simple. A tall pine sapling had been cut down and lopped of its branches about six inches from the trunk, and then let down the well and fixed, so that it was quite easy to descend this frontier-invented ladder.

Custaloga with some difficulty assisted the Indian to descend, and then they found themselves in a room of small and irregularly-shaped dimensions, the ceiling of which was hung round by stalactites of beautiful and singular shape. From the extremity of the room flowed a small, clear stream, that poured steadily down into a white, round basin which it had worn away in the solid limestone.

The little stream trickled across the chamber, and then found vent through a dark hole in the wall, out of which a man might have passed, crawling on his hands and knees. Here, over the whitest sand, it escaped into unknown depths below, where it could be heard with a dull, trickling sound, ringing silvery changes in the caverns of the earth, where it was lost to the knowledge of man, as is all cast into the strange, mysterious well of unknown depth found in Upper Egypt. From the point of every stalactite on the roof of this cave a drop of water fell slowly upon stalagmites rising to meet them, some of very singular and extraordinary shape. About twelve feet square of the ceiling and floor of this singular subterranean chamber was as dry as tinder, and had once been the retreat of a bear, ere Custaloga hunted him to his lair and killed him.

There was a bed of dry leaves on the floor, on which the wounded warrior lay gladly down to rest his wearied and bandaged limbs. Custaloga assisted him as well as he could, placed near him a gourd of fresh and sparkling water, some bear's meat, and then lay down himself to snatch a moment's rest. But his mind soon overcame the fatigue of his body, and he started up from some terrible vision of Amy Moss being murdered by the savages, quite alarmed and surprised to find himself in his cave, with the Shawnee sleeping uneasily by his side.

He rose quickly, replenished the sick man's gourd, and then, leaving him for a short time to his

fate, started on his journey to rejoin his companions in the *cache* in the Devil's Gully.

CHAPTER XII. THE CARSTONES.

SOME sixteen years previous to the events recorded in our present narrative, there were things taking place in England which it is necessary to reveal.

There lived in P—, a town not very far distant from London, a gentleman of the name of Carstone. He was a merchant, who, having been very poor in his youth, had suddenly grown rich during the war with America. Now when Carstone left his native village, fourteen years before, a poor adventurer going up to London in search of fortune, with naught but a few letters of introduction and a couple of sovereigns in his purse, he left behind him one Fanny Wilmot, a wealthy gentleman-farmer's daughter—a bright-eyed, sunny-faced creature of fourteen, whom, child as she was, he had sworn to love all his life, and one day return and marry. But, difficulty and doubt met the path of the sanguine adventurer, and Fanny Wilmot received but one or two letters, and then appeared forgotten. Not so in reality; but Andrew Carstone saw no prospect of success, and he ceased his letters because he could not see the chance of wedding where he loved, and would not keep her from better chances.

And now, at thirty-two, Andrew Carstone, by a sudden stroke of fortune, and the subsequent affection taken for him by one who first made him his partner and then his heir, found himself a rich man. It was with this new joy to announce that he invited his cousin, Charles Carstone, to dine with him—his cousin, who had first frowned, then fawned upon him, as the lure which gilds the leaden statue, the wooden block, the mean wood, the false coin, fell in showers upon him. But Charles had always been cunning. He had never acted with rudeness to his cousin—not he. He—the man about town, the votary of fashion, the companion of bad men in high places, who tinsel but do not gild crime—was too finished, too perfect a gentleman to be unpolite; he simply declared himself unable to be of any use to his cousin.

"My dear Andrew," he said, as in all but a court dress he entered the other's dining-room in his city house, "your letter dewites me—you are as rich as that old bwuffer they call Cwesus; how will you ever spend your money?"

"I really don't know, Charles; leave it to you, I suppose, if I die—nobody can tell, you know; we are all mortal—so I have sent for you to say that in case I do not marry and have children, I've made you my sole heir."

"Weally—well!" exclaimed the other, without moving a muscle; "ewapital. Ah! ah! But you'll marry—quite suwer. What should I do with the money? Ah! ah! pwetty idea—two hundred thousand pounds. Why, it's dwadful to think of! I hope thar wine is good; I'm weally fwamished."

Charles Carstone was a fine fellow, six feet high, with powder and bagwig, a sword, small-clothes, a dashing coat, long waistcoat and buckles, and looked the very beautiful of a lounging, but harmless man about town.

He was a perfect contrast to Andrew, who, at thirty-two, was handsome too in his way. He was shorter than Charles—much shorter—but then he was well made, with speaking eyes, a frank, open countenance, a florid complexion, and a mouth which exhibited every sign of firmness and kindness of disposition. He smiled at his cousin, who was a captain in the army and a man of fashion, and bade him commence dinner.

"Ah, Charles!" he said, shaking his head, "if a woman I did love once, ay, and do love now, had been true to me, I would have married as you advise; but it can

not be. *She* never could have waited fourteen years."

"Haw! haw!" laughed the soldier, heartily. "Fwoteen years—haw! haw! Fwoteen days is just possible. But twy, my dwea' Andrew—twy. It would be so dewiteful to fwind such an exwample of wuwal simplicity."

And try he did. Taking coach the very next day for Cheddaker, he made his way to the home of old Squire Wilmot, and in answer to his knock, the door was opened by a very handsome-looking young woman, with light auburn curls, blue eyes, and a sweet complexion—the very picture of rustic beauty.

"Fanny Wilmot!" faltered Andrew Carstone.

"Andrew!" shrieked the young lady, and she was next instant half-fainting in his arms.

"What in the name of wonder is this?" cried a bald-pated, stout little man, rushing out.

"Andrew Carstone, come back to claim his little wife," said the merchant, solemnly.

"No! no! none of your Andrew Carstone's for me—frightening my little girl, too," cried the exasperated parent.

"I am quite well now, father," said Fanny. "It is Andrew, my own true Andrew, whom I never doubted."

They walked into the parlor.

"And so, my beloved Fanny, you never doubted me?" said the merchant, wiping away a tear from eyes that had not shed tears since their parting.

"Never! I thought you dead, or gone to the colonies, or unfortunate, but never false. No; I knew you better."

"Pretty kettle of fish!" cried the squire.

Andrew Carstone clasped her hand and told his story.

"And pray what may be your position now?" asked the squire, who feared he had come to her as a last resource.

"I am worth two hundred thousand pounds," said he.

"Then Fanny was right, after all—an obstinate, disobedient, worthless jade, who refused fifty offers, and always said, in spite of all I could do to show her the absurdity of it, 'I am the affianced wife of Andrew Carstone.'"

"My Fanny! my beloved girl!"

Next day, Andrew wrote to his cousin Charles, and informed him that, as he had found Fanny faithful and true, she would, with as brief delay as possible, become his wife; still, as he had raised his expectations, and as he supposed he must ultimately destroy the will in which he had left him every thing, he should add a codicil, leaving him twenty thousand pounds.

Charles, in due course, replied that he was delighted to find there was such constancy in the world, hoped soon to have the pleasure of embracing Mrs. Carstone, thanked his cousin for his kind promise, and finally declared that a few hundreds yearly would be much more agreeable than any prospect at the other's death, which he dutifully hoped would be a far-distant event.

Andrew Carstone replied by requesting him to draw for one hundred and twenty pounds every quarter.

Andrew and Fanny were married after fourteen years' separation, during which neither had ever forgotten the image of the other, and their marriage was one of unexampled felicity.

The young merchant realized his property, bought the house his father had once lived in, and retired to that place sacred to the memory of parents who, however misguided in their way of living, had always been kind to him. The house was old-fashioned, but large and substantial. It had a beautiful garden behind, and was in every way comfortable and agreeable. But there was something better than all. There was a happy man and woman in that house, who loved each other with a warm and passionate love, which was perhaps all the greater from having been so long restrained.

And they lived in happiness, and the squire was delighted beyond all his dearest expectations. His son-in-law was as great a man in P— as he was in the village, and this was saying not a little. He owned the nicest house, he bought all the most eligible property, he subscribed to every charity, and both he and his wife were universally beloved; and then, to make their home a paradise, there came a thing of love and light, to infuse delight beyond all description into that house. The Carstones had been happy before, but now their felicity knew no bounds.

Charles Carstone wrote a warm letter of felicitation.

And then Andrew Carstone fell ill.

It was one December night, when the frost was on the ground, and the air was cold and bleak, and the stars were clear in the heavens, and all nature, despite the time of year, was pleasant in England, where winter has charms sometimes as great as those of summer in its most golden hours. It was in December—the trees were leafless and dead, the hedges showed no green, the fields were glazed with frost, and the pool and gutter by the wayside were full of ice. Urchins had slid on those gutters during the day, and the wind had roared over those fields and meadows, and the sun had set streaky and red! and now the midnight breeze hovered in cold and chaste harmony over treetop and housetop and hill.

And there were more houses in P— than the house in which the Carstones lived. But there was no house there where deeds so terrible were done as were done in that house that night.

What is this coming along the London-road? It is a post-chaise, that moves with slow and measured step, as if the horses had been borrowed from some undertaker. It stops before a row of high trees close to the house, which is silent and dark, save where in one upper room there is a light, where Andrew Carstone lies sick almost to death, and Fanny, his affectionate wife, is tending him with patience and care, with that gentle and all-enduring love that sheds around the thorny bed of sickness roses and other fragrant flowers, and which keeps down so much the querulous spirit of the sufferer.

A man, then another, stepped out of the post-chaise. Both were masked. One wore the rude garb of a man in the lower class of society; the other must have been at all events not obviously a poor man, for he wore bravely the dress of a "ruffian," or "blood," of the period when George III. was king. Neither spoke. The man who first got out felt cautiously about under a hedge and found a ladder. This he carried quietly to the house, and raised it against its side. The man in gay doublet, and with sword, stood still at the foot of the ladder, which the other slowly ascended. Having reached the window, he paused and listened. The postilion, who was also masked, moved uneasily on his horse; the man at the bottom of the ladder looked cautiously and nervously about. The man at the top of the ladder pushed the window. It opened. He had not watched the house for weeks, without discovering this careless habit on the part of a servant.

He pushed it gently until it was quite open. Then he crept cautiously and slowly in, throwing the light of a dark-lantern on the room, and then closing the window behind him and disappearing.

He remained absent a quarter of an hour, which was an age to the men below.

The room to which the midnight thief had gained access was a library, sitting-room and study, where Andrew Carstone, in his days of health, sat and read, and carried on his correspondence, and where he kept some portions of his loose cash in a drawer of a desk. He had bought lands and received rents a few days back,

and this the robber knew. It was strange to note, however, how straight he went up to the very drawer and opened it with a key from his pocket, and pulled out the bag, as if he himself had put it there, and were taking possession of his own property. It was done in five minutes.

Then he groped slowly along and opened the door onto the landing. Again he listened, and all was still. He crossed to another door, which he opened. A light burned here, a long candle in a kind of case with many holes, that sent bullet-shaped rays all about the room. And in this room was a bed, and in this bed a nurse, and by her side the child of Andrew Carstone and Fanny his wife—a treasure more dear unto them than all their wealth. The man looked at the child as it slept in all the calm innocence of its age, and he sighed. But whatever his feelings might have been, he overcame them, for the next minute he took it gently up, wrapped it, without waking it, in a cloak that had served it during the day, and moved back the way he came.

He crossed the library, he got upon the ladder; shivering now with fear, he descended, and, followed by his companion, hurried toward the post-chaise, which slowly turned round, and, after a few minutes' easy movement, went off at a rapid rate toward London. Not one soul in the whole town of P— had seen the post-chaise, which appeared to have got across country, as it had not been seen even by the toll-man.

A cry of wonder, and then a shriek, resounded through that house as the nurse, moving in the bed, then stretching out her hand, discovered her loss.

To describe the scene—the sick, half-dying father, the wretched mother, the noisy nurse in fits, the wild agony of grief which burst upon all, the running here and there, the calling for the child, the rush to the nearest magistrate, his arrival, the discovery of the ladder, of the robbery, the surmises, suspicions, doubts, fears, hopes—would be impossible. That one night would need a volume to explain its every episode.

Suspicion in the mind of Fanny at once pointed to Charles. But a Bow street officer, employed by a worthy magistrate of P—, proved that the courtier had been confined to his bed for some days, saw no strange visitors, had no wise changed the tenor of his existence; so this suspicion was dismissed as unworthy, and the cousin of the bereaved knew not that even the breath of doubt had ever fallen upon him. He heard of the sad occurrence in due course, and when able to sit up wrote a very kind letter, which a month after was followed by his arrival in person. He was rather thin and pale, and the air of the country was likely to do him good, so he stopped a little while, and assisted energetically in all the search made for the little one.

Our readers need scarcely be told what that search was. High and low, in every part of the country, in London and in all the towns of the kingdom, they hunted for the little girl. Bills were printed and posted up round the town halls, at inn doors, round magistrates' justice-rooms, and by word of mouth was the tale told; but no tidings came of the child.

Andrew Carstone and his wife spent time and money for many and many a day in looking for her. They mourned until their hearts were seared, and they never had any more children.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MOSS.

MEANWHILE the inhabitants of the Moss, as the Block-house was familiarly called, remained in a state of great excitement. All in that place were sufficiently familiar with what in other times the Indians had done, to make them view the prospect of a general insurrection of the savages with

great and mysterious dread. The characteristics of border warfare had been brought out with such great force by the occurrences of the recent war between America and her ill-advised stepmother, that the very mention of the hatchet being once again dug up, filled every one with dread and alarm. There was not one who rose on the morning of the day on which our narrative takes us back to the Block, who did not listen for the war-cry, the hideous yell of the Shawnees.

Sentries had held the Block all night, and yet nothing had been seen. The black and his confederate had thought proper to disappear as mysteriously as they had escaped, and in the morning not even their tracks could be found. Squire Barton offered to scour the woods with young Moss, but the judge peremptorily refused that any thing of the kind should be done until the return of Custaloga.

It was the morning of the third day after the departure of the two adventurers. The sun rose with all its usual brilliancy and cheering light on that forest scene, the birds caroled merrily on every tree, and all nature was gay and bright. But that was a serious party at the breakfast-table of the judge. He himself came in, dressed with all his usual care and neatness, but very pale, and with such a mark round his eyes as no father who loved his child need have been ashamed to show, though he had washed them for half an hour with cold water to hide the tell-tale tears.

It was evident, too, that Jane Moss had taken little sleep. Her cheeks were pale as the ashes of the forest-trees, and though she tried to assume a cheerful tone the attempt was a failure.

The squire was always pale and rather gaunt, and his appearance did not therefore exhibit anything unusual.

"My children," said the father, solemnly, as soon as they were assembled in the breakfast-parlor, "join with me in prayer to that Almighty power which alone can remove from us this bitter cup."

They all started. The judge had never proposed family prayer before. He had rather avoided it, and been indeed a little satirical on others for the practice. But it was noticed by all who came to the Moss from that day that he never omitted it again.

"Willingly," said Jane, as she rose and fetched her mother's great Bible, and laid it before the judge.

His son made a sign of earnest assent, the squire made no objection, though there was a sneer on his lips.

The father read some appropriate texts from the New Testament, uttered a short and earnest prayer, and then sat down and motioned to his guest to partake of the viands on the table.

"You seem all rather down-hearted," said the squire; "but it is my opinion that all is right. The Indians might make Amy a prisoner, but they well know you would give something handsome for her release."

"All I have in the world, squire. I love my land, and I love my property—I am proud of it—but it is as dross—let them take all, so they spare my children."

"Father, dear father!" exclaimed Jane, wildly, "you must not talk this way. I am sure no one would hurt Amy—they could not do it. I feel sure Custaloga will give us good news before the day is out."

"My darling child," continued the judge, shaking his head "you little know the savages. They are ruthless beings, who spare neither age nor sex. Have you forgotten Montcalm? No, no; they care as little for woman as man when their passions are aroused. Besides"—here the judge glanced fearfully at his son and at the squire—"there is a life which is worse than death. Fancy my Amy the inmate of a savage's wigwam. My God! my God!"

"Miss Moss will never be the wife of a red-skin rascal," said Barton, dryly; "I believe she would prefer death."

There was silence for a moment, during which all ate or pretended to eat, while the negro attendants moved in and out silently, stealthily, looking earnestly at their masters, whose affliction they cordially shared.

"Massa," said one, entering suddenly, "dat ole raskal Ezram Cook is on oder side ribber—him in great hurry—want de ferry."

"Ferry him over, in the name of Heaven!" said the judge, to whom the fact of a new arrival was a relief.

Scarcely had the judge spoken when Ezram's voice was distinctly heard on the other side, singing in a tremulous, but very loud voice,

"Come, all you girls from New England that are unmarried yet,
Oh, come along with us, young husbands you shall get;
For there's all kinds of game, besides the buck and the doe,
To hunt with dog and rifle all on the Ohio."

The squire looked uneasily at his companions, and exchanged glances with the young man. The anxious and observant judge caught the glance and spoke.

"Say what you think, squire. I am prepared for the worst."

"Oh, nothing that I know of; but Ezram is an old friend of mine, and I know by the sound of his voice he's skeared, that's all."

Jane did not speak, but she looked at the door with deep concern, and waited. All imitated her, and their anxiety grew intense as they heard Ezram coming near.

"You fat old guys," said the new arrival, addressing the negroes, "you are killed, I guess, with easy living. Never mind—look up; you'll hayve plenty uv work, I guess—I expect you'll be up to Chillicothe, and won't them red-skins polish you up slick? Your servant, judge—ladies—ah, only Miss Jane, I see. Servant, squire—servant, sir—wha! the first time I've breathed, I do thynk since I left the Crow's Nest. Bloody work up thar, sir—bloody."

"What mean you?" exclaimed the judge, tottering, as he rose to his feet. "Speak—in the name of Heaven, speak."

Jane sunk back on her chair, not fainting, but transtixed with horror, gazing with one eye at the new-comer, who stood with his saddle-bags on his arm and his whip in his hand, without taking a chair, so surprised was he at the tone and manner of all present. The squire himself was livid, while the young man stared from one to the other, almost unable to credit his senses.

"Why, judge—I really guess I've sid somethin' unpleasant—I'm consyd'able ryled, if I hayve, by Jakers—but I may be allowed to remark it wur quite promiscuous. I ain't reikivered my fright yet—I was almighty skeared, that is a fact. I went up to do a bit of trade with Harrod, and to collect a matter of business—I'm blamed, sir, if they ain't all clear gone—the house ha-fe b'unt, and signs of a fire."

"Lost, lost, lost!" groaned the judge, while Jane, after a faint shriek, almost slid to the ground, until caught by her brother, who carried her in his arms out of the room, and gave her to her black attendants. He then hurried back.

"Unkinmen strange! What hayve I sid!" cried Ezram.

"Said?" replied Squire Barton, moodily; "why, you'll understand, when I tell you that Miss Amy was at the Crow's Nest."

"My!" exclaimed the other, looking very much confused. "Well! I don't wunder you were skeared—but it's my opinion, it's all square—there warn't no bodies, and there was a considerable trail of prisoners."

Here Ezram blushed violently, for he had seen the grave.

"Then there is hope," said the stricken father; "but where, oh where is Custaloga?"

"He's out, is he? Then I guess it is all square, judge. Dick Harvey's with him, ain't he?"

"Yes!"

"Then I saw a trail—but there was two whites and an Ingine by the marks," said Ezram Cook, as he seated himself.

"It's Custaloga, Harvey, and Harrod," put in the squire.

"That's it, by Jakers," replied Ezram; "so I say, judge, it's pretty correct. They're be-hind 'em. But Clay-ri and the little ones—that's what ryles me. I guess, squire, the riptyles killed them. There was a new-dug grave."

"A what?" exclaimed the father.

"A new-dug grave. Now I know them Ingines—they wud kill Clay-ri 'cause she couldn't walk—that's their idear—but mark me, judge, they ain't killed Miss Moss, and it's as I say it—I, Ezram Cook, as has lived up in these parts a few. I don't think as how the riptyles wud touch me, and if it's any satisfaction, I'll ride up to Chillicothe to-morrow, and inquire. I guess that catercorned catamount, Simon Girty, will be thar."

"Ezram Cook," said the judge, solemnly, "you are an Indian trader, and not likely to be hurt by them even in war-time. Go, as you say, to Chillicothe—I am already in your debt for goods—I will double, I will treble—"

"Now, judge, stow them promises—I'll go, I've said it—tomorrow, when I'm rested, I'm off—but by your leave, judge, I'll polish the inner man, which is considerable wolfish—I ain't stopped since the Crow's Nest."

"Eat, drink, and rest," said young Moss, while the squire, who was very silent and moody, continued his breakfast. The judge made some excuse and left the room. They all guessed where he was gone, and were not surprised when, half an hour later, he was seen with Jane leaning on his arm in the garden.

Ezram ate his breakfast in solemn silence, young Moss attending him with all the high-flown courtesy of the day, though without much speech, of which none were very free that morning. When the meal was over, they at once rose; Ezram retired to a room which was prepared for him, Squire Barton took a rod and a pipe, and went sauntering up the stream, while young Moss had a conference with Bill Harrod, from whom, despite the mysterious escape of Spiky Jonas and the Indian, all suspicion had vanished. The young man was restless and uneasy; he did not like to go away, at all events with his father's knowledge, and yet his young blood was too hot to lie still within the fort while Custaloga and Harvey were on the war-path in search of his sister. He accordingly took Harrod aside, and offering him a pipe, the following conversation ensued:

"Harrod," said Charles, sitting down on a log, "I can not bear this suspense. The Crow's Nest is sacked and burned, and Amy is a prisoner of the Indians."

"And Clayri," asked the hunter anxiously, "they ain't lifted that gal's hair?"

"I fear they have," replied Charles, sadly, "the poor girl was ill, and you know—"

"A hundred thunders!" said the hunter, striking his knee with violence—"blood and scalps!—if a few don't die for this, my name ain't Bill Harrod."

"I have no doubt," continued Charles, "that you will avenge the murder of your brother's wife. I would shoot any of the scoundrels myself; but, it is my sister—my dear sister, I must think of now. It is true Custa and Dick are out; but they are only two men."

"But I guess they is men as is men, and no mistake."

"They are, but they are only two, and if Walter be with them that makes but three. I must go out to-night, and try and join them. Will you go with me? Five rifles will count against the rascals."

"Won't I though?" replied Bill Harrod; "I just will—and may I be sliced and roasted, if they don't hear tell of my shootin'-iron. I

ain't no bragger, but they've killed Clayri, and stull Miss Amy—my! I do feel woldish, that is a fact."

"That is agreed then—at night-fall we meet here and start. Don't say a word to any one. We might reach the Crow's Nest in the night and start on the trail early."

"That's agreed, captain. Now take my advice, jist go and lie down a few. If you wud make sich tracks as that, I say lie down. After a snooze a man feels right up and down."

"I will lie down," replied Charles, thoughtfully; "perhaps some news may reach us during the day. Pray to Heaven that it be not worse than we know of."

The young man pressed the hunter's hand and turned away, avoiding the garden where the judge was walking up and down with Jane.

The hours passed wearily and sadly: at last, night with its gloom hung over the whole scene.

Supper was over, the judge was in conversation with Ezram Cook and the squire, Jane had taken up a book, and Charles, rising with an affectation of carelessness, left the room. Once out, he was about to move rapidly across to the rendezvous, when a hand was laid upon his arm. He turned round and saw Jane by his side.

"Dear Charles, where are you going?" she said. "You are not going out into the forest alone?"

"How know you that I am going at all?" he said, a little impatiently.

"You are going in search of Amy. Go, my brother; but I beg of you do not go alone," continued Jane, leaning her hand upon his shoulder.

"My dear Jane, I am going, but not alone. Say not a word to any one—I would have it thought that, as the Block is short of game, I and Harrod have run down to Green Burn in search of deer. Go in now, dear girl, and perhaps tomorrow night we may be all united again."

Charles hastened to join the hunter, who waited for him at the little postern-gate. A negro—one of those most attached to the family—stood by to bar and lock the gate behind them. He trembled as he stood, for the events of the last few days had filled his mind with vague alarm, which the expedition of his young master was likely to increase instead of diminishing.

"Now, Sip," said Charles, taking his rifle from the hands of the negro, "not a word. You mustn't know any thing about me."

"I is mum. Tink cull'd gen'l-man hab no debsecrption? Say notin' to de ole man."

The two adventurers made no reply, but passed the wicket and stood in the open clearing that lay between them and the forest. It was chiefly cultivated fields that lay before them, fields of corn, pumpkins, and a vegetable garden, while a small portion was used as grazing ground for the cattle, which, however, were generally driven to a rich upland clearing, about two miles distant, where there was a farm-house, which, since the commencement of the disturbances, had been abandoned by all save one man, Bennett, who would lie concealed on the top of a haystack, on the watch for the Indians. This Bennett had been an old scout in the war, and was never so happy as when out on some dangerous mission. On the suggestion of Harrod, it was determined to add Bennett to their expedition, for which he was amply qualified by his experience and undaunted courage.

There was a wide path usually followed by the cattle and the hunters who made for the forest, but which lay so open to observation from the Block-house, in which a sentry was placed soon after nightfall, that young Moss and Harrod turned off to the right and determined to follow the skirt of the forest. Habit, and the fact that the Indians were in arms in

the woods, made them act with considerable caution. They had started on an enterprise of known danger and difficulty, and they determined from the very moment of starting to use all the precaution known to border experience.

The moon had not yet risen, the last remnant of day had long since vanished. The forest lay deeply imbedded in gloom, and the Block-house, as they occasionally looked back, appeared one heavy black mass, except where a light flickered, or perhaps a spark flew up one of the wide, low chimneys of the servants' range of building. They advanced about four hundred yards along the skirt of the forest, and were not more than twenty yards from the path which led to the sheep-farm, when Harrod halted, caught Charles by the arm, and drew back under the deep shadow of the trees.

"There wur a sound caught my ear which made my heart bump. You've young eyes, cap'n; just look out on the *pararie* yon—there, wur my mother's grave is. It may be a wolf, but I guess I heard vyces—ah! there they is. Hist! we're surrounded by the varmint. Keep close, as you vally your life."

Charles looked in the direction of the solitary grave, round which one or two low stunted trees had been planted, and he plainly saw three men crawling slowly along the ground, as if fearful of detection from the Block-house.

"I'm peppered," whispered Harrod, "if thar ain't Spiky Jonas. I'm determined to nail the varmint. He's a-gwine to try to open the wicket."

Charles shivered all over with rage and excitement, but he did not move, as there were sounds in the forest at no great distance, which proclaimed the presence of a large body of Indians. They heard them quite plainly about fifty yards to the right, talking with scarcely any of that caution which usually characterizes the Indian, and Harrod was quite sure there were white men among them by the laughing.

"Some of them dirty, white-livered thieves, as is cut out of white folks, 'cause they is so dirty. I do hate a man as consorts with Ingines. Keep close—hush, they've treed us—my! won't thar be a screamer in about *tu tu's*. I'll give 'em a Ingine yell. You follow me whin I fire and run."

Charles listened. A very little distance to the left he could hear some one advancing with extreme caution through the bushes, halting as if to listen, then pushing on again—all so slowly, so stealthily, that none but the most practiced ears could have detected the slightest sound. The two men held their breath. This was probably some prowling Indian or renegade, eager to distinguish himself before his fellows, or on some other mission like that confided to the three who were still crawling along the prairie. It was a common practice with Indians to commence their attack by setting fire to some part of a building, hoping, in the confusion, to enjoy advantages which otherwise would be lost.

They held their breath and looked. The man had evidently reached the very skirt of the wood, then a bush shook about six yards from them, and a head peered slowly and warily out. The end of a rifle covering his person was also seen.

"Bennett," said Harrod, in a very low, but distinct voice.

"Wagh!" replied the other, with a little start; "Harrod!"

"Yes, my boy, and master Charley," continued Harrod, grinning; "this is what I call a lucky meetin'. We wur jist a-comin' up to you, but now I guess we'll jist go back."

"As smart as lightnin' jist. Thar's four hundred, and no mistake—and a bloody set of pyrates they are. There's Simon Girty and Spiky Jonas and Tecumseh. They seem sartin of takin' the Block. They've got Miss Amy—"

"Thank God!" Charles whispered; "we thought her dead."

"No; I heard one on 'em—I lay snug tiptop the hay—tellin' Spiky

Jonas as how they'd tuk Miss Amy, and she was kip safe. They nearly cotched Custa—he is a venturesum devil. He wint right in the camp and speaked to her—and thin got away."

"It's a pity he ain't here," said Harrod; "that's a man as is a man. But my opinion is this. We're bound to 'larm the Block. I say shute thim three guns, and thin the devil take the hindmost."

"That's the particular ticket I votes for," said Bennett, clutching his rifle.

Charles nodded his head, looked to his priming, and stood ready.

"I takes Spiky Jonas—I cannot kill him this distance, but I'll stop his jaw above a bit—there's a part on him jist stickin' up now. Here goes."

They all fired, and instantly, without any further attempt at concealment, bounded over the plain in a straight line for the fort. At the same time they gave a hearty cheer, which all who heard could understand to come from white men's throats, and could not be confounded with the hideous and moaning yell which burst from the negro, upon whom Harrod had taken very careful aim. The other two were wounded, but they maintained a dignified and solemn silence.

Lights began to flash in the Block, there was a hurried running and driving, and then all was still. The garrison had taken up its posts and stood ready for an attack. The night, however, was so dark, that it was difficult at the first glance to distinguish friends from enemies. Charles knew this, and therefore halted at a certain distance from the fort.

"Father," he cried, in a loud and anxious voice.

"Who calls?" said in reply the voice of the squire.

"I, Charles," replied the young man, whose tones were, however, somewhat husky from running.

"Keep off, you sanguinary varmint," roared Barton; "no tricks here. Fire on the knaves, riddle them."

"Father!" said Charles, in perfectly agonized tones, "it is I and Bennett and Harrod. Make haste, or the Indians will be on us."

"Open!" exclaimed the judge; "it is my son. A father cannot be deceived."

At this instant two dark columns of Indians were seen dashing over the prairie, one along the skirt of the forest, the other along the open path across the prairie. At the same instant the furious barking of the dogs announced that either an attack or a feint was to be made on that side also.

The gate was opened; on came the fugitives, who in another instant bounded through, just as a volley from the Block-house was fired at the advancing crowd, which caused the Indians to raise a wild yell that rent the air, that roused the echoes of the wood, and almost chilled the bravest hearts.

"Out with all lights!" said Charles, as he bounded toward the riverside, "and let the women keep in. Harrod, bring your gang this way."

The barking of the dogs grew more furious, and Charles, Harrod, Bennett, and ten others of various occupations, hunters, laborers, shepherds, blacksmiths, who were close to cover, soon saw several canoes full of Indians turning the corner of the stockade. The firing from the Block continued so furiously, and was so fiercely returned from the Indians on the prairie, that the barking of the dogs was almost drowned, and the party on the water-side were chuckling at the result of a stratagem which appeared likely to give up the much-coveted Block-house, all its treasures, its arms, ammunition, and prisoners, without a blow. On they came, then, without attempt at concealment, at least forty warriors, armed with guns, tomahawks, and knives. They clutched their little bright axes, as if they thought a hand-to-hand conflict more probable than any other and any one could have

seen by the faint light of the twinkling stars, and that vague light which, as the darkness grows entire, appears to wrap all nature, their fierce eyes gleaming with delight, as they prepared to bound on the soil of the interior of the stockade.

Heavens! that was a yell, as thirteen rifle-shots laid thirteen warriors low, and the white men, with cutlass and with ax, bounded on to oppose the landing of the grim and painted warriors. They ceased firing in the Block-house, they ceased firing on the prairie, to hearken to that horrid sound. But it was gone; and naught now could be distinguished but the cries of victory, the curses of the white men, and the groans of the dying Indians. The repulse was so evident, so terrible, so unexpected, that in a few minutes the contest had ceased, and the Indians were pushing off. The whites flew instantly to cover, to avoid the shots of the retreating Indians, when first a shrill shriek was heard, and then a prolonged yell so unearthly, so horrid, so new, so different from any cry of Indian ever heard before, that all stood transfixed. Then Charles rushed toward the breakfast-parlor, with death at his heart, and was about to enter, when a huge Indian, yelling, shrieking, roaring, came forth, and knocking him down, leaped over the chevaux-de-frise into the waters of the river.

Charles rose instantly and entered the room, where he knew that his sister Jane had taken refuge, and whence had come that fearful shriek of hers that made it terrible to enter within those precincts. All was still and hushed, save the moaning of a negro girl, who usually attended on Jane.

CHAPTER XIV.

A GLEAM.

We return to Andrew and Fanny Carstone.

How the sad couple mourned for the little one as dead, it would be weary and painful to tell. Long they hoped and trusted, and then they hoped no more, for it seemed wicked to buoy the heart up with false light, when all was dark and gloomy in the future of their earthly existence.

Andrew Carstone was approaching fifty years of age, a staid and earnest man, whose whole existence was one of patient study and thought and reflection. He was a good and kind landlord, he was gentle to the poor, he was lenient as a magistrate; he ever remained what he once had been, an excellent husband.

Time did not lay its hand too heavily upon them, for they used time well, and at forty-six and fifty, Mrs. and Mr. Carstone were a pleasant couple to look at.

They spoke now of the child as of one long since dead, gently, sadly, but not with that bitter pang of grief which touched them at first, and which from its violence had worn itself out.

Charles Carstone—who had been knighted for some deed of little note, and was a very precise and solemn courtier, a prim man in days not remarkable for nicety, days when men scarce spoke without an oath, when wine was a measure of man's capacity, and modesty a thing but faintly understood—they saw little of. He came once a year, at Christmas, was very polite and attentive, received his annuity with a formal, pleasant letter of thanks, and continued on his way, still Sir Charles, unchanged, unaltered, except that there was a Lady Carstone in the case, and one fine boy of thirteen, to whom it pleased Andrew Carstone to think the family estate would one day go.

Andrew Carstone was in his garden, which ran along the back of his house, and skirted a pretty lane with trees and green hedges, and Mrs. Carstone was with him looking at the flowers and the shrubs, and the gravel path, and the quaintly-cut yew trees. Andrew was dressed in the fashion of the day. He wore his own hair

and a three-cornered hat, a riding habit buttoned to the throat with large buttons, and boots that went above his knees, for he was about to ride forth to some meeting of magistrates. His wife wore a dress, the petticoat of which was turned up all round, showing another skirt, and a high body, which was open in front and laced. Her hair was tied back in a knot, and a cap with long ribbons fluttered on her shoulders.

They stood on a path near the wall, looking at some apricots in bloom, Andrew pointing to the wall with his heavy riding-whip.

They both started.

A head, nothing more, protruded over the wall; but it was a head seldom seen, but, once seen, not easily forgotten.

It was a very ugly-looking, middle-aged man, peck-marked, sun-burnt, with little gray eyes, a large mouth, and a shaggy head of hair, red, uncombed, and dirty; the whole set off by an expression of low cunning that belongs only to ignorance and guilt combined—and in general guilt is the consequence of ignorance in those who should obey, and in those who make the laws.

"I say," muttered this apparition, in such a voice as a door-mat with a severe cold might be supposed to indulge in, but which was really a tone common to some constant drinkers of raw spirits. "I say, asking your pardon, is you the beak?"

And the head disappeared as if by a trick in a pantomime, and then bobbed up again, and looked hard at the astonished couple.

"What does that horrid man mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Carstone, somewhat alarmed.

"I believe, my dear, he wishes to know if I am the magistrate."

"Exact—that's what I means," continued the hollow voice, again disappearing, as if its speeches were uttered upon tiptoe, and the exertion was too much to be sustained.

"I am a magistrate, sirrah; and pray what do you want? Persons who wish to speak with me usually ring at the door."

"But is you Muster Carstone his-self?" continued the man.

"I am Mr. Carstone," began the magistrate, "but I again—"

"It's orr rite," exclaimed the thick-spoken individual; "that's fah you. Cor for a ans'er in ten minits."

With that he cast a crumpled piece of paper on the ground. The magistrate picked it up impatiently and opened it.

"Merciful and all-wise Providence!" he cried, turning ghastly pale, "come back, man—come back!"

"Orr rite!" said the shaggy head, again bobbing up; "yer I am, gov'ner—orr rite!"

"What is it, Andrew?" gasped Mrs. Carstone, with a vague hope.

"Orr rite," said the man.

"Our child! our child!" exclaimed the father, wildly.

"Speak! Oh, Andrew, what is it?"

"Listen. This paper says that the writer, on his death-bed, repenting of a crime, wishes to gain pardon from Heaven by revealing the place where our child lives—still lives, Fanny! Come round to the door, man—make haste, I will join you."

"Orr rite," repeated the shaggy head, again disappearing, while the husband and wife hurried, arm-in-arm, into the house, unable to exchange a word.

In five minutes more the messenger of such glad tidings was in the magistrate's private office. He was a short, thick set looking man, in very ragged attire, with an antiquated hat, and a stick in his hand, and a general look of one who slept in market-places, or on piles of straw, or in hay-stalls—anywhere, in fact, but in his natural bed.

"Man," said Andrew Carstone, "if these tidings you bring be true, you shall be rewarded beyond all you can hope. Tell me all you know."

The man explained as well as he could that a comrade of his—one Joe Mullins—"a old post-boy as was," being laid up and likely to die, was very much tormented by his conscience. He lived with the deponent, one Cornelius Ragg, following the humble profession of a rag and bone dealer, also a purchaser of unconsidered trifles. He, the said Cornelius Ragg, seeing that he really was ill, induced him to confess being concerned in robbing a house, and thence stealing a child; and upon hearing this statement, he, the worthy bone-picker and purchaser of unconsidered trifles aforesaid, did then and there induce the said Joe Mullins to tell the truth to the parents of the said child on certain conditions, in such a case made and provided.

First. The utmost secrecy as to all the said Andrew Carstone might see or learn in his visit to the bedside of the said Joe Mullins.

Second. Perfect immunity for the said Joe Mullins, should he recover from his illness.

Third. A slight reward in the way of a small annuity for the said Joe Mullins, always provided that he lived to enjoy it.

Fourth. A small fee, or gratuity for Cornelius Ragg, as the messenger of glad tidings.

"You live in London?" said the magistrate, anxiously.

"Her do," replied the man.

"How came you here?"

"Wark'd," continued the bone-dealer.

"Can you ride on horseback?"

"R-rather."

Andrew rung the bell. A manservant appeared—a staid man of five-and-fifty.

"James," said his master, "I can trust you. There is news of my child—not a word to a living soul. Take this man, have him dressed up in the best clothes you can find among your own and John's. Tidy him, and make him look as much like a groom as you can. Saddle Brown Bess and Sally."

Mr. and Mrs. Carstone, when once alone, clasped each other's hands, and then fell on their knees and uttered an earnest prayer that the hope thus excited might be realized. Andrew then bade his wife be of good cheer, and prepare to accompany him in any search he should have to make for the lost one. His wife could scarcely speak, but through her tears and sobs she promised to remember all he said.

He snatched some refreshment, and as soon as his attendant and the horses were announced as ready, Andrew Carstone kissed his wife, and, accompanied by Ragg, dashed off along the London road, at a pace which showed his eager desire to end his journey.

Many were the people who stared to see them go. Cornelius Ragg, in a suit much too long and too loose for him, his face washed, his hair cut and combed, his legs incased in high boots, looked even a more extraordinary personage than he did in his previous dirty garb.

It would be idle to tell how Andrew Carstone rode to town, how he showed little of that tenderness for his beast which was generally his characteristic, how he dashed down half-crowns at toll-bars without stopping for change, and hence was taken for a highwayman by the discriminating tollmen, and how at last, covered with dust, he reached London.

He put up his horse at a city inn, took hasty refreshment, for he was sorely exhausted, and then with little change to his attire he sallied forth into the streets toward the place indicated by Cornelius Ragg, where Joe Mullins lay sick unto death, tormented by his conscience because he had done evil.

The inn they put up at was the Belle Sauvage, on Ludgate Hill, which Andrew Carstone had selected from its proximity to the borough where the dealer in bones and other such minute trifles had his residence.

The bereaved father lost no time. He burned with eager desire to hear the tale which the man had to tell, and to know if there really was hope of ever recovering the lost one.

Armed with pistols under his coat, and with a trusty sword by his side, he stood in the coffee-room of the celebrated inn, while Ragg was outside preparing for his expedition. In the room sat a man in a red waistcoat, a three-cornered hat, a coat with large buttons, and a round, bull-dog countenance, who examined the magistrate curiously but respectfully. An idea flashed across the mind of the retired merchant. He advanced close to the man.

"You are Finch, the Bow-street runner?" said he.

"I am, sir," replied the other, respectfully.

"You know me, I see. Well, keep me in sight, but do not interfere unless I call. Do not know me from this moment."

He threw down five guineas and returned to the spot he had been standing on. Ragg at this moment entered, nodded familiarly to the police agent, and asked if Mr. Carstone was ready. The magistrate expressed a wish to breakfast before he started. The Bow-street officer gave a rapid glance full of meaning at Mr. Carstone, and went out.

When about a quarter of an hour later the master and his new man sallied forth, there was an odd-looking fellow in the yard, whose garb proclaimed one in the last stage of poverty. He bowed humbly to them, and Mr. Carstone gave him a penny. Ragg was in advance, and the magistrate had just time to catch the meaning eye of the Bow-street officer.

At the end of about a quarter of an hour they were in sight of a narrow street, or rather lane, of a very impoverished description. The part of London they had passed through was certainly not a glorious specimen of the metropolis. The houses were dirty, the windows dark, the street covered with filth; men, women, and children, looked squalid, and miserable. It was one of the head-quarters of the demon drink.

Over a shop, a little way up the lane, was written in white letters over black, *Cornelius Ragg, feet*. What this meant nobody knew. It is believed by the best-informed inhabitants, who convey the tradition to our times, that the father of Cornelius was an artistic individual, who, when he set up business, copied the last word from the corner of an old painting, without the smallest or faintest idea of its signification. By some it was believed to be the real family name of the Raggs, by which they declined to be called because of their present humble position in society.

At this establishment Ragg halted, entered, and bade Mr. Carstone follow, the whole lane being in an uproar at the return of the bone-dealer in his present strange garb. The magistrate glanced up the street, and saw the Bow-street runner enter a tavern—the bank which received all the money of that market.

Amid an insufferable odor of rags, bones, old iron, and abominations without name, the anxious man made his way. He saw before him a ladder, by the side of which stood a portly dame, who stared at Cornelius as if he had been a ghost.

"Now then, leave off starin', will yer?—its her right."

The woman made no reply, but stood stock still at the bottom of the ladder.

It was a low, dark room. The bed was but a truckle-bed with one mattress, and from this came a moaning sound as of one suffering. As they trod on the old creaking floor, a man raised his head.

"Will Corney never come?" he muttered. "I shall die, I shall die."

"Hor right," replied Corney.

"Have you found him?" began the sufferer a man about forty

pale, haggard, thin, with eyes that seemed to start from his head.

"I am here," said Mr. Carstone, gravely.

"Oh!" cried the sick man, sinking back, "give me water! water!"

The magistrate examined him attentively, felt his pulse, and then spoke.

"You are not, perhaps, so ill as you fancy. You have sent for me, having raised hopes long since dead. If there be any truth in the promise you hold out, there shall be not only no means spared to save you, but you shall be provided for for life."

"Mr. Carstone, I have wronged you—do you promise entire forgiveness, and more, protection if I live?" asked the man, in a faint voice.

"Forgiveness and protection," said Mr. Carstone, solemnly.

"Oh, sir, I was but a boy—I am but thirty-five now; and Hackett and Sir Charles did bribe me—I was very poor."

"Sir Charles!" said the magistrate, striking his forehead and starting.

"Good gracious, sir—did you never guess?"

"Oh, perfidy! I see it all. My child stood between him and fortune—"

"Ay, sir, and a pretty fortune he has made of it."

"In the name of Heaven, what mean you?"

"Why, sir, he's put her, yer know, out of the way, and he's raised a matter of twenty thousand pounds on the estate."

Andrew Carstone sat down by the bedside in silence a moment. His face grew dark, and an expression of hatred perfectly fearful crossed his countenance.

"Tis well! Now, man, listen to me. You are about to reveal to me where my child is—for that I am prepared. But hearken; as you trust my protection and desire to be saved, not one word of this to a living soul. Let me find my child, and I shall have in my hands a rod which will make the villain skulk where no living being shall see his face again. Sir Charles! Sir Charles! you have deceived me. But bitterly shall you pay for this! Where is my child?"

"In America," he began.

"In America!" said Andrew, with a perfect groan of anguish.

"In America, with a man named Hackett. Ragg knows him well—he passes as her father."

"Ragg," said Andrew, turning to him, "I am a magistrate. I know your trade well. Give up this shop, make up your mind to be honest, and I may perhaps save you from a halter. You must go to America with me as my servant. Behave like a man and you shall be rewarded. On my return, I will provide for you beyond your most sanguine hopes. You have begun a good work—carry it out. This evening I will give you whatever you may require in the way of money. This afternoon I will gain tidings of the first packet—with that we sail. You," addressing the sick man, "shall be removed to the country. I expect you, on my return, to be well and ready to prove your word. On my honor as a man, no harm shall happen to either—the guilty only shall be punished."

The two men listened attentively, and when he had concluded, both accepted.

Ere ten days were over, the sick man had been removed to a farmhouse. Andrew and Fanny had parted, and the magistrate was on board a packet bound for New York, accompanied by his new serving-man, Corney Ragg.

They traveled as Mr. John Smith, and Tobias, his servant.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ATTACK.

WHEN Charles entered the dining-room, he found Jane sobbing in the arms of the negress, whose special duty we have said it was to keep company with Jane and wait upon her. It was, however, almost

impossible for him not to laugh when he came to understand what had happened.

Jane had been sitting on a sofa beside the window, listening with anxious ears to the sound of strife without, and endeavoring, despite the danger, to school her mind to thoughts less gloomy than those which were natural to her situation. The more readily to attain this end, she had earnestly tried to check the alarm of the negress, who, like most of her race in a state of servitude, was wanting in the first elements of courage. She was busily engaged in this task, which, from the extreme terror of the girl, was both a thankless and unamusing one, when the skirmish and the sounds of battle, with all its horrid din, came close to her door. The crack of rifles, the war-whoop of the Indians, the manly shout of the white men, the yells of the wounded and dying, the whole rendered doubly terrible by the gloom of night, still further alarmed the negress, who retreated into the furthest corner of the room and clasped her hands in agony.

At this instant, a huge painted Indian, in his fierce and "hideous bravery," came bounding into the room, and stood facing the horror-stricken white girl.

"Bozhoo, sister," said the Indian, really struck by her infantine and graceful beauty, "get up,—quick, no talk, scalp," he added, angrily.

"Mercy!" replied Jane, faintly, striving to rise.

"Pretty one prisoner," continued the Indian, stooping to help her to rise. What his words were next it was impossible to say. They were doubtless the most ferocious curses which man in his most degraded state ever gives vent to, and uttered with a shriek of such agony as made Jane close her eyes and almost faint. Then the Indian turned and bounded from the room.

"De uglee debble—yah! yah! yah!" said the negress, giving way to a violent fit of laughter, as she returned to its place the half-empty kettle which had been the weapon of warfare used by her. "De uglee ole reb-skin—teach him to obust Missa Jane—scald him skin spec—tink he won't run berry fah! Yah! yah! yah!"

Jane opened her eyes, and seeing no one near her, save the negress, gave way for a few minutes to a burst of passionate tears, such tears as come naturally from woman when she has just escaped a fearful and terrible danger.

"Brave Hebe," said Charles, smiling, when the negress had put him in possession of the facts, "'twas bravely done. I think this repulse will check the knaves; so Jane, dear, have the valuable kettle replenished, and we will e'en take a late tea."

"Golly! golly!" grinned Hebe, "tink I see ub now, rub hib red skin."

"But where is Amy all this time?" asked Jane. "Custa said she should be here before this."

"Custaloga and Harvey will fulfill their task the easier that the Indians are round the Moss. Be of good cheer, my sister."

"Dear Charles," she said, blushing, and looking on the ground, "there was something in that wild man's manner that told me it was not death Amy would have to fear. An Indian can see her beauty. Oh, to be tied to the wigwam of a Shawnee—she that hates the race in her heart, despite her every effort to be generous!"

"Yes," mused Charles, gravely, "her detestation, to a certain degree, of the colored races is peculiar—I have often feared she would make Custa our enemy, and Heaven knows such a friend is needed indeed."

"I have feared it too, Charley—her sneers, her allusions, her constant words, speaking of all save the whites as beings of an inferior race, have often puzzled me. Custaloga, too, has heard them moodily; but oh, Charles, he is generous, brave, and good, and I can never mistrust him."

"I love him as a brother," said Charles; "but it would have been as well if Amy had been more tender of his feelings. You have educated him, elevated his mind, chastened his speech, made the fierce savage kneel at your altar, proved that he is capable of lofty sentiments, noble feelings, and keenly alive to all that you admire in poetry, sentiment—"

"Save that he remains an Indian in garb, in love for the forest, in his instincts."

"The consequence, dear girl, of early education; but I am confident that, did Amy show less repulsion for the savage race, she might entirely reclaim him to civilization."

"And become Mrs. Custaloga, I presume?—Thank you!" said Jane with courtesy.

"And she might do worse," replied Charles with a sigh, as he turned away, and went out.

It was evident that the contest was over for a time. Not a gun was heard, not a cry could be distinguished, and when he came to the Block-house he found that the Indians had retired on all sides. His proposal to place a few sentries was therefore readily acceded to, and the judge, Squire Barton, the peddler, and the younger people were soon collected in the supper, dinner, and breakfast-room, as it was indiscriminately called.

"This is the beginning," said the judge, after a few moments of desultory talk, "of a war between the whites and red-skins, which must end in the extermination of the latter. It is a pity. I know well that everywhere the early discoverers of America, glorious Columbus excepted, treated the natives with a cruelty which justifies much; but the Indians will by such acts as those of to-night lose their best friends. I have always demanded justice for them, I have always demanded even-handed justice, and I would hang a man who shot an Indian in cold blood, as I would hang one who shot a white man or a negro."

"Nay, judge, I'm not of your opinion!" exclaimed Squire Barton. "No! no! hang me—a red-skin and a nigger are not white men. I never thought the natives could be preserved."

"The squire's right, judge," said the peddler; "the squire's right, and his remarks is judgmatical. The abrygines ain't no account agin a white man. I've traded with them up an' down considerable now, but I'm bound to say they are a pesky set of varmints."

"They are a bad lot generally," continued the judge, "drunken, thievish, treacherous, and murderous; but there are noble fellows among them, faithful, sincere, and true; Custaloga is as fine a specimen of humanity as any in the country."

"We all know your opinion of him," said Barton, dryly.

"I am sorry to say we know yours," said Jane, an expression of anger and sorrow crossing her face. "Would that all men were as brave and generous as he!"

"Miss Jane," replied Squire Barton, with a laugh, "I know I may not speak of your and your sister's pupil; but you are already aware that he can be over boastful. He has not brought back Amy, and I fancy you must even turn to poor me after all. It is, therefore, my intention to leave the Moss to-night, to go down east, rouse a strong party, and relieve you and rescue Amy, which is more than either the Wyandot or his double, the Mad Artist, will ever do."

"Leave to night?" said Jane, looking strangely at him.

"Leave the Moss?" repeated the judge, who simply regretted the loss of the rifle. "But, why think you dear Amy's case so desperate?"

"I do not believe it desperate," replied the squire; "but I believe that no two young men and a young girl can cross from Crow's Nest while these savages are in the woods. Rely on it, judge, the worst that can happen to Amy will be a few hours' detention. She is

known, and a savage has even more cupidity than ferocity."

"I hope so," said the judge, solemnly. "If you think, then, that your going is best, go, but hasten back."

"How will you depart?" asked young Moss.

"By the dug-out," replied the squire. "I will glide down when the moon is hid, strike Gum Creek, and it will be a good-legged Indian that will catch me."

"I will go with you as far as Gum Creek," said Charles, "and bring back the dug-out. We may want it."

"Well, judge," began the trader, looking uneasily at the squire, "I think promiskus like, I'll be on the move—tu g'yuns is better nor one."

"Promiscuous or not promiscuous, you'll not move with me," said the squire. "You had better stop until I come back, which will not be long."

"Very good, squire," remarked the trader, carelessly; "I dar say the judge will give me house-room, for I'm reck'ned unkimmin good at a long shot."

"You and all honest men are ever welcome," said the judge, earnestly; "but every man who aids me now to drive back the bloody heathen is my friend."

"And, judge, he who brings relief, and restores your child, will have claims, I fancy, even greater," remarked the squire.

"He who restores unto me my daughter shall not bargain with William Moss. I am his slave, as was the genius of the lamp to the man in dear Amy's famous story, and nothing that he asks will I refuse."

The look of the squire was now so proud, so self-satisfied, and so strange, that Jane viewed him with astonishment. Never had she seen such an expression on his face. She translated favorably. For some time he seemed to fear that Amy did not receive him so well as formerly, and it was natural that he should snatch at the opportunity of restoring her to her friends, and thus gain the support and countenance of her father. Little more was said on the subject, and after supper Charles and Barton went out to examine the forts and change the sentries.

The night was very dark. The savages showed no sign of life, and the vast expanse of forest gave forth no sound, save when a slight moaning was heard, as of the dying wind, or the cry of the whippoorwill came softly from afar to wake the son. to sad harmony. But, all gave sign of a storm. The dark clouds from the north-west came bodily toward the earth, charged with vapor and electricity, a damp feeling pervaded the atmosphere, the air was chill and cold, darkness spread over the whole face of nature, surcharged with the menace of the tempest; and then the rumbling of thunder was heard, gusts of wind came rushing over tree-tops and through the forest glade, the great limbs of the trees rattled and fell, so that the sentries, with every possible good-will, could scarcely distinguish an inch before their noses.

The Block-house lay in deep obscurity, except when the lightning lit up the scene, and then the wary borderers kept close, peering only from chink or crevice, to see that none approached. But the Indians appeared utterly inactive, and it was difficult to realize that there had been on this spot so lately a deadly combat.

"Charles," said Barton, in a low tone, when they had gone their rounds, "hold out forty-eight hours and all will be well. You have powder and ball, and good men and true; and your defense will be easy for that time. Ere it has passed, however, you shall have relief; I will dash for the Crow's Nest with the Little Bridge Regulators—they are mounted, and the thing will be easy."

"You are a brave fellow, Barton," replied Charles, "and I trust we shall soon see you again."

And yet there was a constraint in the manner of Charles, who

for reasons of his own had no great or earnest desire to see him become his brother-in-law. He had lax notions of morality, which were far beyond the sympathy of young Moss.

Barton made no reply, but prepared for departure. He saw to the priming of his gun, he wrapped it up carefully to guard it from the wet, he changed his dress for one wholly composed of deer-skin. He looked to his pouch, his knife, his short, bright ax, and then stood still on the edge of the wharf, where the canoe lay moored. Barton and Charles listened: not a sound was heard. They looked: nothing could be seen. With the stealth of serpents they then glided into the boat, just as the sharp voice of Harrod from the lower part of the Block cried to the sentries to be vigilant and careful.

Up the river and down the river they gazed, and then began paddling across to the forest on the opposite side.

It was with a feeling akin to awe that they approached the deep shelter of the beeches and oaks that lined the banks of the Scioto river. They avoided the open glade, amid which, behind girdled trees, their foemen might have been lying. It was not very long, however, ere they breathed more freely beneath the deep shadow of the forest trees which overhung the water. Suddenly Barton seized the arm of young Moss and shook it convulsively.

"Hush!" said he, "there is not an instant to lose. Look!" and he pointed to the prairie on the opposite side of the river; "see where the stockade is high—they have ladders. If we startle them now, we are lost."

Charles looked, and saw indeed, by the glare of a lightning flash, a large body of Indians advancing with several men at their head, who wore the garb of white men, and in the hands of these were scaling ladders.

"A moment," added Barton, stepping out of the canoe and springing on to the shore; "now we can do it. Let us both fire, and then you dart for the Block openly. They will have too rough a reception to mind you."

"Well thought of," replied Charles; and instantly the two young men fired.

The voice of Charles Moss at the same time was heard above the storm:

"Up, my lads, give it to the bloodthirsty knaves—defend the south bastion." With these words he darted across openly, still repeating his cries, and such was the noise and confusion which ensued that none noticed his return to the fort. The fight there was hot. The men in the Block had aimed at the rear of the column, the head of which, however, was still beneath the stockade, whence it was not easy to dislodge them. Charles, with a smile on his face, rushed to the kitchen, thinking all the time of the act of Hebe. A large copper which contained some soup for the negroes' breakfast—pea-soup, of which they were very fond—was on the fire. Delighted to find this, Charles summoned one or two of the negroes, and bade them fill three or four pails full as quickly as possible. The negroes obeyed, laughing all the while, and with this ammunition Charles rushed to the high line of stockade, which was intended to defend the girls' bedrooms from danger. A garden ladder, a pile of wood, and other aids were soon found. Then three active men caught each a pail, and after listening to hear where the assailants were digging at the foundations, they tipped the pails over. The yell, which burst from the unhappy wretches, was such that not one in the Block heard it unmoved. It was a fearful and cruel act, but one of those excused and absolutely necessitated by the instinct of self-preservation, when alone man may be pardoned for being a little fierce and devoid of that gentleness which on all other occasions should be the characteristic of human nature.

To a certain extent this act had

the opposite effect to that expected. Some of the besiegers fled, some fell writhing in agony on the ground to die, while others, rendered desperate by physical pain, planted the ladders and rushed to the assault with cries and shrieks worthy of demons. The garrison was paralyzed—but only for an instant, and then the reckless band was beaten back with ax and gun.

The horror experienced by the garrison during this brief combat, which altogether did not last more than twenty minutes, is scarcely to be described. The backwoods-men, who were fully prepared for events of this nature, fought with that coolness which is their usual characteristics; but there were in the Moss many women and children, to whom such scenes were new. They had heard of them by the fireside, as they had heard of other events in the history of their country; but the description, even by the most experienced, did not come up to the reality, and scarcely one of them but would, after what had occurred, have gladly returned to the quiet settlements from which they had originally come.

The judge himself now bitterly repented having quitted the quiet and serene life of the bench, for what he had expected would be a rustic and happy seclusion, surrounded by green trees and verdant fields, where the maize and the pumpkin, and lowing cattle and sheep, were the most striking objects he expected to see. He had himself, however, acted no mean part in the contest, and now stood listening with profound gravity to the explanation of his son as to all that had occurred.

"That soup was mighty well served out," said the Indian trader, laughing. "Master Charles, I fancy you give them fellows a bit of a treat. Pea-soup ain't gen'rally discharged in pails—not at all."

"Hush!" cried the judge; "what is that, my son?"

All listened.

"Water! a cup of water!" cried a feeble voice from without the stockade—"I am dying."

"Christian men, as I live," said the judge.

"Cursed renegades, white Injuns," replied Ezram.

"It matters not—they call for aid in the tongue in which I learned to pray and to thank God; I can not refuse them succor. Charles, let a sally of six picked men be organized, and such as claim our aid be brought in."

Charles was accustomed to treat his father's word as law, and the words of the trader fell upon him without effect.

A sally, under the circumstances, was a very serious thing, and as such Charles Moss treated it. Accompanied by Harrod and four of the best and most active men of the garrison, he went out, leaving close to the postern gate, and chiefly on the outside, a large body of laborers and dependents of the Moss, who were prepared to cover his retreat in case of necessity. Then, conquering the disgust he felt for the task imposed upon him by his father—his friend Barton had given him such fearful accounts of the renegades, especially of Simon Girty, as to make him hate them ten times worse than Indians—he glided along the palisades, and reached the spot from which the besiegers, under the novel circumstances in which they were placed, had not been able to remove their dead.

"Water! water!" still faintly murmured the wretch who had first attracted their attention.

"Where are you, rascal?" said Charles, in a low but angry tone. No answer came. Rightly judging the cause, he spoke again, but in gentler accents.

"Fear not, we are Christian men; and if you—no matter what you are—are still alive, answer, and quickly, for we may not tarry here."

Indeed, the position was becoming serious. The besiegers, fancying that the besieged were crawling out to scalp the dead, com-

menced a random fire from a distance, which increased in force every moment. The cry was repeated in a low tone, then Harrod and another caught the man up, and the little party beat a hasty retreat just as a cloud of Indians—furious at the disgusting opportunity of triumph, which the white men they thought were taking advantage of—made another rush at the Block. This, however, was repelled by so vigorous a discharge from the Block itself that the besiegers retreated, and the prisoner was brought in without any further difficulty.

It was a white man, as they had expected.

"Give me water!" he cried; "lay me down—I'm done for. Oh, my back! my back! That accursed Simon!"—and then he glanced round, as if expecting to see some one who answered to that name—"It was his doing. Lay me down."

They took him into the lower room of the Block, and laid him on a mattress. He gulped down a large draught of water, and then closed his eyes for a moment.

"Which is the judge?" he asked, suddenly starting.

"I will fetch him," said Charles.

In another moment the judge entered. He was pale and stern. He closed the door behind him, and the bed of the wounded prisoner was surrounded by Mr. Moss, his son, and Harrod. The latter held a pine-torch, which cast its fitful glare on the countenance of the man, whose pallid face, blue lips, and wild eyes, with that constant thirst which was not even assuaged by water continually poured on his lips, proclaimed him dying.

"Judge," said the man, who was an outcast from England but recently arrived in America, "I am a villain, but do you forgive me?"

"I am a Christian, and it is my duty to forgive my enemies," replied the judge, solemnly.

"Thank you; I'm dying, I know, and it serves me right; but—but—"

"You have some secret?" continued the judge.

"Yes—yes—I have—a secret—Simon Girty pushed me to—it—I never meant—but, judge, there is a serpent in the Block! Water!"

"I knew it," cried the judge, looking wildly at his son; "I knew it! I knew it!"

"Give me water—how my veins burn—I can scarcely see—what is that form? It is the tempter! Away, Simon; I will not harm them—they never harmed me—take back your gold—Indians, too, men who scalp, and burn, and torture—no! I can not be so foul a ruffian—I will not do it. Water! water! water!"

"You spoke of a serpent," said the judge, kneeling down by his side; "I adjure you, as a dying man about to enter the presence of your Creator, speak."

"I spoke of a serpent—Simon is a serpent—everybody is a serpent—are the young ladies safe? Yes. I know they were not to be harmed."

"What means this?—what dark and terrible mystery lies hid beneath these words? Speak, man; speak, and calm a wretched father's fears. What know you of my child?"

"There is," said the man, rising and sitting up, while an arm was put back to support himself, and speaking in a low, hushed, hissing tone—"there is a serpent in the Block—a horrid, foul serpent, a monster in human form—I stole a sheep—to escape hanging I fled to America—that was my crime—and yet I am not a serpent, I am not a traitor—oh! my back is on fire, my tongue burns—I die—beware of the—"

He spoke no more, but fell back groaning and murmuring, and then all was still. He was dead.

"This is awful," said the judge, rising. "Who can he have meant?—could it be the negro?"

"I guess that war it," said Harrod, gravely; "he said the—"

"He did—but as the negro and the Indian are out with these monsters that can hardly be-

Who could he mean? There is the negro, Jonas; the Indian, Custa; and the squire—none of whom could possibly be meant."

"It is, indeed," said the son; "this poor devil meant to warn us, but his mind wandered. It is terrible to have some horrid suspicion hanging like a pall over our heads."

"It is, my son," replied the judge, rising; "it is, indeed. But we can learn no more here; let us trust in Providence. In the morning, Harrod, give this man sepulture outside. In open day they will not dare attack us."

Sentinels were carefully posted, Harrod was appointed sergeant, and then the rest of the defenders of the Block retired to seek as much repose as was possible under the circumstances.

About midnight, when all was quite still, and the wearied sentries dozed at their posts, and just before they were about to be relieved, a dark form glided from the sheds where slept the blacks, flitted along the garden, stood on the banks of the water, and then noiselessly disappeared.

In the morning, Hebe, the wife of Spiky Jonas, was nowhere to be found. Terrible was the commotion in the Block.

"It was she! it was she!" said the judge, in a sad tone; "but it is better so. The serpent has left. I can breathe more freely."

But Hebe Jonas stood outside the gate an hour later, asking to be readmitted. Her sad and gloomy countenance seemed at once to explain all to the judge. In accents of unmistakable grief she told how she had sought and found her husband, who, however, had laughed her to scorn and driven her forth to the forest. Relying on the goodness of her master, she had returned.

"She is innocent," said Charles, marking her beseeching eye.

"I am sure of it, my son. Hebe, go to your work."

And the Block was again disturbed by suspicions and doubts.

CHAPTER XVI.

SCOWL HALL.

SOME years before the commencement of our tale, there had come to live in that land which has received so many fugitives—some for conscience' sake, some for crime's sake, and some for fancy's sake—one Edward Morton de Grey, a man of substance and note. He came from England with a wife and a wife's son, and with many servants, a retinue quite surprising in a colony. He bought a vast estate, built him a house, and called it Scowl Hall.

It was a quaint old house, in a deep wood on the banks of a stream, and the owner left a skirt of wood round the place when the clearings were made, so that he could not see the fields which surrounded his dwelling, and which were to be his wealth. He bought negroes, employed laborers, kept horses and hounds, and was a kind of fine old English gentleman on a small scale on the banks of the Ohio.

He was about forty-five years old when he came to that land, and his wife was nearly the same age. She had a son, James Barton, nearly twenty, between whom and the husband there existed no friendship, all his love being given to his two boys, Reginald and Walter, one three, the other one year old. He had married her, it was said, for her dowry, which was very great, and had run away to make interference on the part of her relations useless, and the woman, who loved her husband, gave him all, and trusted to him to provide for her son by her first husband. Edward Morton de Grey was, in most senses of the word, an honest man. He had a hundred thousand pounds with his wife, and in his will he gave an equal share of this to all the children; but he divided the whole of his own vast property between the younger boys, giving his step-son nothing of all this, and to the survivor he gave all.

War existed between England and her colony, which was soon to be the cradle of civilization, progress, and liberty; and Mrs. de Grey, who was of a delicate and timorous nature, alarmed at last at the war and rumors of war, and especially by an Indian attack, died after a very short illness.

It was the afternoon preceding the funeral, which was to take place at a considerable distance. The coffin lay in the state-room, of which the shutters were closed. The servants looked up with regret and awe at the window where lay the mortal remains of a good and kind mistress. A beautiful young negress, to whom the grown-up son always paid marked attention, sat in a shady bower with the two handsome boys of that dead mother who lay within. The colonel, as he was called, was in his room, and the shutters were all closed, and no one, under any pretense, would have dared to disturb him.

That strangely-built house looked solemn enough at any time. Its first floor was built of stone and brick, and its foundations were laid low in the earth. It had a portico in front with a flight of stone steps, and a veranda all round; and behind, it had its water-stairs like any Venetian palace, and boats that looked like gondolas ready for pleasure or business. Above the first floor, and projecting three feet over, was another story all of wood. Large beams had been laid across, and rooms built upon them two stories in height, with odd-looking gables, a vane, a flag-staff, and the bust of a man with a very stern look—hence the name of Scowl Hall.

This peculiar formation gave the lower rooms a dark look; but on the first floor they were spacious enough, and cheerful. One of them was really large and fine. It was furnished with great magnificence, and here Mrs. de Grey used to sit, and in company with her young children would pass the hours in teaching them—the one to talk, the other to read—while Phoebe, the young slave girl alluded to, looked on in admiration or wonder.

But that room is closed now, and no more shall the fond mother's voice be heard, no more shall the children listen to the loved sound, sweetest, dearest, most gentle of all sounds; for she is dead. And all is hushed and still, and the young nurse speaks to them in low and trembling tones, and the children are still, for they think that their mother sleeps.

A horrid cry suddenly awakes the echoes. A band of Indians, savage and ruthless, and of whites more savage and ruthless still, rush upon the place,—the servants fly; and half an hour later the body was alone, for the husband lay scalped beside his wife's coffin, and not a sign of negroes or children was to be seen. The huts of the slaves were burning too, the house having been only sacked, and then suddenly abandoned, when the presence of death was discovered.

When young Barton returned to the home he had left—sad, it is true—to make some arrangements for the funeral—he found himself sole heir of Scowl Hall, and of all the possessions of his family. He found no difficulty in establishing his claim. The terrible tragedy made a noise, but such things were common then; and when Phoebe came back ransomed from the Indians, and told how the poor children had been slain, there was a cry of horror, and Squire Barton was recognized, by public feeling and by law, sole inheritor of his mother's, stepfather's, and half-brothers' property.

There were those who shook their heads solemnly, and said they would not be in his place for ten times his wealth—there were those who whispered strangely and sadly about the sudden slaughter of the De Greys. But was there ever a man who came suddenly into great possessions without exciting murmurs? And then the rumors died away, especially

when, in a distant churchyard, Squire Barton erected monuments to his mother, and to memories of Squire Edward Morton de Grey, and his sons Reginald and Walter, cruelly slain by the border Indians.

Some years later, after a life of considerable irregularity, he took unto himself a wife, a young and gentle thing, who did not agree with Phoebe, and who died after four years of no great happiness, and who, having perished of a contagious disease, was hastily interred with the others. This was about the time that he met with Amy Moss, and laid his vast fortune at her feet.

Scowl Hall was a dreary, solemn place, where the squire spent his time in rollicking and drinking, and holding orgies with strange men who came no man knew whence, and who were no man knew what. There were no residents then near the Hall, and none cared to venture down there for pleasure; so the squire lived with his own set, and hunted and fished, and drank, and sung with his comrades, uninterrupted and unnoticed. Even his wealth did not gain him much respect, though his life was really not known, except that his wife's relations cut him dead, and would not so much as hear the name of the man who had killed, they said, sweet, confiding Helen Jay.

At the Moss little or nothing was known of all this, as the family came from a distance, and Amy being openly affianced to the wealthy squire, few cared to interfere. And then Squire Barton was rich, and wealth is a cloak that will allow a man to commit many acts which would be crimes if perpetrated by a poor man. Wealth, like charity, covereth a multitude of sins.

In the gray light of a spring morning, at the time when the narrative of our tale continues, the place looked dreary indeed. Nothing, it would seem, had been done to restore or improve it since the day of the massacre, except that the door was refastened on its hinges, and the windows strongly barred. But the stones and bricks were dirty and damp from the vicinity of the trees, the wood above was cracked for want of paint, the windows were dirty for want of cleaning, and all exhibited evidences of decay and waste.

The outhouses still were numerous, for there were many negroes on the estate, and then there were the buildings inhabited by the overseers and white men in the service of the squire, men of strange and odd aspect, who always went about armed to the teeth, and who formed, as it were, a body-guard to the petty monarch of that region; for here on his own ground, where none dared venture to interfere with him, Squire Barton was king.

At the window of the room once occupied by Mrs. de Grey was a negress. She was about thirty-five years old, or perhaps a little less, by no means ugly, but surly and ill-favored in expression rather than feature. She wore a red cotton handkerchief around her head, and was dressed otherwise with considerable taste. She was yawning as if just up, and had not yet shaken off sleep. As she brought her arms down again, she rested her elbows on the window-sill, and looked out.

Close under the window stood a man whittling a stick. He was a queer-looking fellow. His face was gaunt and thin. He wore a conical cap, which was supported by a head of hair, matted and dirty, that hung like a pent-house over his brow. His forehead was low and retreating, while his eyes were so far sunk in his head as to be only distinguishable by their glare. His nose was hooked, and very narrow and thin at the nostrils, while his mouth appeared a mere slit in a red flat surface of flesh over a pointed chin. An expression of extreme ferocity, of low cunning, of gross and vulgar sensuality, rested ever on his face, even when he smiled, which was seldom indeed.

He wore a tight-fitting frock coat, and over this was a gun *en bandoliere*; in his belt were stuck a most formidable pair of pistols, while another belt in the opposite direction supported a shot-pouch and horn. A cutlass was added to this walking arsenal. High boots over his pantaloons completed his attire.

"De top ob de mornin', Massa Simon Girty," said the woman.

"Mornin'," growled Simon Girty, the owner of a name scandalous on the borders, and to be more scandalous still; "so you kin git up, blackey?"

"Phoebe no call to get up sooner dan her like," exclaimed the negress, "and my name no blackey."

"Sartin—hearn you say that afore now, ole gal," continued the ruffian.

"Nebber you mine—what de tongue Iwar? Say da same ting twenty time, if a like," said Phoebe indignantly.

"Go it, screamer—pitch ahead—I'm ther'—hyar he is, Simon Girty, as can stand any amount of gab. I'm half horse, half alligator, and a bit of a door-mat," said the rude borderman, with the nearest approach he ever made to a grin.

"Yah! yah!" laughed the woman; "but nebber mine—Phoebe ain't berry bad—got a berry nice break'st—massa Simon eat a bit a Ole Joe?"—that was the name of the last pig that had been killed.

"Well, you are a riglar roarer. I've filled my craw pretty well, I guess, this mornin', but I don't mind a little bit of pork."

"Wah dat?" said the woman suddenly. "A boat down dah!"

"Stand up and show," cried Simon Girty, in a loud voice, turning toward the stream, "or I guess you'll hear tell of my old shootin'-iron."

"Hold your tongue, and keep your threats for others," replied a voice from behind some bushes, and then a canoe, in which was Squire Barton, came in sight. Phoebe disappeared immediately.

"Mornin', cap'n," said Simon; "you're good fur sore eyes, I guess."

"Am I?" replied the squire, whose canoe was hauled up to the bank, and who was getting out of his boat; "that's more than you are, I fancy. What's the meaning of all this row, and why is Tecumseh attacking the Moss?"

"I'm shot!" exclaimed the astonished ruffian, "I thought that Squire—"

"You thought like a fool, I dare say," replied the squire, angrily; "and who thought about going up to the Crow's Nest, and killing Clara, and putting that devil of a Harrod on us?"

"I wish I may be shot, cut into little bits, and stuck in a huckleberry bush," cried Simon, "if I know. Clayri killed? That's some of them pesky Injines."

"And Miss Amy Moss," said Squire Barton, who had reached the door-step, "where is she?"

"She's right as a coon, only one of them boy Injines is over head and ears—"

"What!" said Barton, clutching the other by the wrist; "what said you?—speak, I say, or I shall—"

"I guess you wun't," replied Simon, coolly; "and my wrist ain't a tomahawk. I said as how the Injine as treed Miss Amy is sweet on her—that's all."

"Who told any rascally red-skin to touch Amy?—who thought?" he said, in a voice of savage and sarcastic irony.

"I can't say—I didn't—I never was more streaked in my life, never—I didn't know a coon's hoof from a moccasin for about half a minute—I didn't."

"Come in, Simon Girty—these things must be seen to. There are some five hundred vermin round the Moss, and that must be stopped."

"My!" said Simon almost to himself, with a look of strange meaning, "the cap'n ain't as fickle as a gal—oh no, not at all."

"There are two men I hate—they must die," replied the squire furiously; "but they are not in the Moss."

"And without pokin' right slick away into secrets as ain't mine, might I fix the names of them two friends of yours?"

"Custaloga and Dick Harvey—I hate them, Simon, with no common hatred. They are in my way. If they were in the Moss, I would not stir a finger to save it; no, not if Jane, the judge, and Charles must perish with them, all save Amy, who is mine—mine—mine!"

Simon looked vacantly at the squire, glanced from side to side, pursed up his mouth as if going to whistle, and gave a long, low and cautious "whew!"

"Custaloga and Dick Harvey—my!" he exclaimed, looking into the other's eyes, as if he expected to detect some hidden meaning in the words of the squire.

"Yes, Custaloga and Dick Harvey, the civilized Indian and the Mad Artist."

"Why?" asked Simon, who, so great was his surprise, leaned against the wall of the house.

"Because they are always in my way—every one likes them. The judge respects and loves them, the cunning knaves; Charles is fonder of them than he is of me; Jane is quite smitten by that low-bred knave, the artist, and—yes—despite her vows to me, I often fancy—yes—I seem to detect in Amy a tender interest for that red-skin thief, the Wyandot Custaloga!"

Simon Girty, the most consummate and finished knave in all the borders, was so astounded at this revelation, that he stood back to look at the squire, as if he disbelieved the evidence of his senses. His look was one of wonder. Barton rushed into the house.

There was far more in Simon Girty's look than merely surprise at wishing to do away with two fellow-creatures. There was a clear evidence of something which Squire Barton did not understand.

"My!" said the ruffian, moved by remorse, "there must be a Providence."

He followed the squire into the house. Brushing past Phoebe, who came to greet him with a welcome, Barton bade her send him breakfast to his private room, of which he snatched the key from her girdle, and added that he wanted plenty of wine, which being served, no one was to disturb him on any pretense whatever, save Simon Girty, whom he ordered to join him.

The breakfast was brought and eaten in silence, as Phoebe waited on them; then wine and pipes being placed on the table, with piles of tobacco, the squire took the negress by the arm, turned her out, bolted the door, and remained alone with Girty, the renegade; for, though a white man, Simon Girty had, after fighting on the American side, deserted to England, and being there found out, had joined the most savage of the Indian tribes.

Of their interview no record remains; but at the end of two hours, Simon went out, and left the squire alone in his private room.

It was a strange room. Heavily carpeted with rich and flowery products of the Eastern loom, with pictures on the walls, chiefly representations of female beauty and portraits of horses; there hung around a whole armory of pistols, daggers, swords, and guns—curiosities, it is true, but evidently thoroughly serviceable. There were two windows, one looking out upon the stream, the other on the side of the house; but both were very strongly barred and furnished with iron shutters. That room would evidently have stood a very good siege, especially as it was situated in the stone and brick part of the house.

There sat Barton. All his bravado of manner, all his outward seeming of carelessness, all his wild merriment of look and mien were gone. His face was haggard and pale, despite the large quantity of wine he had imbibed; his eyes glared round into the corners of the room, as if he expected to see something strange rise therefrom, then, quaffing another goblet, he

rose without tottering, wholly unaffected by the heavy potations which he had taken. He moved the table away from the middle of the room, and raised the center flower of the carpet, which, though apparently of the same make as the rest, was in reality totally distinct. He laid it on one side, and there appeared a trap-door, which he proceeded to raise. His face was flushed—he looked about him uneasily, and listened. No sound of any kind came. Then he went to a cupboard, where the remains of his breakfast had been thrust, took a plate of meat, a large slice of bread, and a bottle of wine, and descended.

In an instant he was gone. Then there was a brief murmur of voices, and the squire came up, a little more livid, a little more ghastly than before, and he replaced the trap, put the carpet over it, put the table in its place, drew a long breath, and sat down.

There he sat until the sun went down, the shadows thickened, and the trees seen from the windows became one solid, dark mass, and night had fallen on the whole scene. Hours passed, and the squire dozed in his chair. There were sounds of serving-men and women, of blacks, of hunters, and others without, the busy hum of evening, and then all was still, and not a light burned anywhere save in the one room, where sat the master of Scowl Hall, tortured, his mind on the rack, revolving the past, which was terrible—the present, which was perplexing—and the future, which was gloomy.

The lights had burned low; there had been sounds of strange import in the forest, when Barton started as a low knocking was heard at the window of the room. There came three separate and distinct knocks, one after the other, on the shutter. He started, rose, and moved to the door of the room, and out into the passage, without a light. In a few minutes he returned with a man in a horseman's cloak, and a slouched beaver drawn close over his eyes. He was of powerful frame, with dark eyes, a heavy mustache, and a generally sinister aspect.

"What news, Barton?" said he, in a hoarse voice.

"Bad news, Colonel Butler," replied the squire, motioning the other to a seat.

"Bad news!" repeated the man addressed as Colonel Butler. It was, in truth, the guilty author of the massacre of Wyoming. "What bad news can there be?"

"That Custaloga overheard the whole plot, made prisoners of the negro and the alligator, and that the Moss will not yield, at all events to treachery."

"Are you playing an honest game, Barton?" said the colonel, tapping him on the shoulder.

"Honest game!" cried the squire with a sneer. "Colonel Butler is sarcastic. Let us not talk of honesty. You want Jane Moss; I want Amy—we are likely to want, in my opinion."

"Hearken, squire. I am an outlaw and an outcast, because in a moment of furious passion I turned against the republic. I repent me sorely this folly—it was not a paying folly. I wish to regain position, station, and fortune, and thus backed, to earn forgiveness of Congress. The husband of Judge Moss's heiress would not ask a favor in vain. You love Amy—"

"I love her!" cried Barton, savagely. "Colonel Butler, you know little of human nature. I wish to humble her—to have her at my feet—to make her take me in glad exchange for worse."

"Well, well, it's all one. You did love her, or else why are you what you are?"

"I would I were not what I am," said Barton, gloomily.

"Regrets are but the bankrupt stock of evil men," replied Butler, with a laugh; "we have launched our boat, we must row in it."

"We must, Colonel Butler, because, by some infernal means at your disposal, you have found out my secret."

"One of your secrets, Squire Barton, if you please," replied Butler, glancing significantly at the floor.

"Well, one of my secrets—"

"Which secret would not exist, if you were as bold to execute as you are to plan."

"Would you have me kill a woman?" asked Barton, angrily.

"It must come to that," said Colonel Butler, with a savage sneer. "But no, do not kill her; take from her every hope, crush her young love, break her heart, be all unto her that any fiend in human shape can be, and 'tis well. You are not an assassin, because she is not dead. But I say again, it must come to that."

"Never," said Barton, angrily.

"Perhaps, then, when Amy is your wedded wife, you will bring her home to Scowl Hall—a haunted house—a house in which there are strange sounds. Zounds, man, the colony is becoming peopled, and Scowl Hall will not long be so solitary; but no matter. As you will. How long do you mean to bear with the interference of this Custaloga and the Mad Artist?"

"Colonel Butler, those young men are ever in my way; they stand in my path, they interfere with me, and Heaven knows I hate them. But it can not be—murder once done, leaves such scarlet on the soul; it can not be done twice."

"So ho! Then you have slain in self-defense," cried the colonel, amazed.

"Said I so?" repeated Barton, with fixed eyes. "I mean worse than murder. I never slew a man, except an Indian, in self-defense, Colonel Butler. I care not how soon those young men perish; but I can not bring about their death."

"You are wondrous squeamish," sneered Colonel Butler; "but now to business. Amy Moss is in the hands of the Indians—they hold her at the village. Now is the time for you to act, and then I depend on you to secure Jane. I have aided you with Amy—your turn has now come."

"And what if I refuse, if I defy you, if I throw myself on the mercy of the judge, and tell the truth?"

"The whole truth?" again sneered the colonel, looking him hard in the face.

"No! no!" cried Barton, vacantly, "the whole truth, that would surprise him!"

"Yes! for even I do not know all, though I suspect—"

"And pray, what do you suspect?" asked the squire, looking at him.

"That which, if it were true, would rouse up the indignation of the whole country, and send you an outcast and outlaw beyond the ken of men. I suspect," said the colonel, emphasizing the word as if to convey that it meant *I know*—

"I suspect that the foray which destroyed the heirs to this estate, and made of so happy a home a wilderness, was organized by one James Barton, with a view to becoming sole inheritor."

"Well, and what then?"

"I suspect that the instruments of the said James Barton deceived him—I suspect the heirs to Scowl Hall still live, and will be produced to confound you."

"Fiend in human shape!" exclaimed Barton, livid with terror and astonishment, "what mean you? Speak, or I will tear out your false tongue."

"No threats to me, sir; but, remember that, once a man has commenced a career of crime which mankind will not forgive, he must go on or perish. You are so deep dyed in guilt that there is no retreat. All we can do is to ward off the blows of the enemy. Squire Barton, there is no time for delay; let your marriage with Amy Moss take place at once, and mine with Jane, and we may hold our heads so high none will see the red blood on our cheeks. I warrant you that the heirs then shall never appear. They have no suspicion of the truth; and she who does know will only speak at my bidding."

"Colonel Butler, I am in your hands. I will away to the village

this very night; I will call at the Frog's Hole—nay, there was an appointment for midnight in the Hut with Kate—"

"There's another piece of folly. That girl loves you—she'll be turning jealous and betraying you one of these days; it seems you have made her your confidant, and expect her to play quiet bridesmaid at the wedding."

"Kate is an honest girl, who has promised and will keep her word. Any weakness she may have had for me will soon pass. She begins to suspect my true character. I am no longer the careless, merry, laughing hunter who made love to her up in the Frog's Hole; she has overheard some speech of that idiot Ralph."

"Why meet at the Hut?"

"'Tis five miles nearer, and easily reached from the Moss."

"Do you ride soon?"

"At once. We can speak as we go along," replied Barton.

The intelligent reader will see that James Barton and Charles Carstone had, in two distant hemispheres, committed the same crime, from the same lust of gold, and it is only one of the singular features of our history that the crimes were both perpetrated on the same day, the 12th February, 177—.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE AVENGER LOOSE.

It was with some misgivings that Custaloga, after the events recorded, proceeded once more to thread his way through the tangled forest, over hill and thicket and bog, to the gully where he had left Dick Harvey and the Silent Hunter. There had been rain overnight, but now the sun shone out clearly and brightly, and the waving tree-tops cast the last drops to the earth, which gave forth a splashing sound beneath the feet of the traveler. Walnuts and oaks and elms, and the silvery beech and the tulip tree, raised their lofty branches to the sky, while the mistletoe, the ivy, and the moss, combined to produce everywhere a series of leafy arches, which at any other time, especially during the noon-day heat, would have been far more agreeable and pleasant. The way through this vast primeval forest was rendered extremely difficult by the half-hidden roots, and by the total absence of any track. Custaloga trusted to that kind of instinct which, even in his case, appeared to have been gained by early acquaintance with the woods.

It was some hours later when he was startled by the cry of wolves quarreling over some prey. He halted, and a thrill of horror went through his whole frame. Then he clutched his rifle and darted through the thicket, quite certain that where the wolf howled so loudly there was no great danger for him.

A pack of wolves was eagerly devouring the carcass of the panther which had been slain by the fugitives in the gully. Custaloga placed his hand on his heart, for his agitation was great. The presence of that yelling crowd of animals was of itself sign enough that something had occurred of moment during his absence, which, prolonged as it had been, must have made his comrades uneasy.

He, however, gave utterance to no word; but avoiding the wolves, which snarled and yelled at him as he passed, he entered the gully, his rifle ready, his ax loosened, his knife gleaming naked in his girdle. On he went, slowly, cautiously, with all the stealth of the animal which had met with so unexpected a death in that same place some hours before.

The cache was empty!

Custaloga stood within the niche leaning on his rifle, his lips compressed, his brow contracted, and yet with an expression of manly grief, of deep sorrow, which did not seem to belong to an Indian. Nor was his speech now at all of

that figurative character which he almost always assumed before others.

"If he has fallen a victim, I could make some such vow as that poor husband has done, and never rest while an Indian lived, be he Wyandot or Shawnee. But why am I such a child? Why have I become in heart a Long-knife? Why have I accepted their God, and laughed at the Manitou of the red-skins? Amy Moss! Amy Moss! you have spoiled a good Indian; and yet, why do I talk thus, and hide my own real nature? Ah! what is that?" he exclaimed, as he saw some rude scrawling on the walls, his eyes becoming more used to the semi-gloom of the locality. "This is wise, and yet 'tis terrible too."

Scrawled on the stone was a very clear sketch of Dick Harvey held by four huge savages and being dragged away, while behind them, on the ground, crawled the Silent Hunter. It required no explanation. Harvey was a prisoner, and the other of his companions, on whose aid he depended for the release of Amy, was behind him, following the Indians. All that remained for him to do was to follow himself, and trust to the decrees of Providence. On himself alone he was not sufficiently vain to rely, but backed by two such woodmen as Dick and Harrod, he had counted on carrying out his plans with ease.

He dashed a line or two under the scrawl, to signify that he had been there, and then away he went back again down the gully toward the trail which he well knew the white men would have left.

He, however, found but one, after the track had advanced some little distance from the place where Dick Harvey had skinned the panther.

"Good," said Custaloga to himself; "Harrod has hid his trail."

He now advanced slowly and with extreme caution along the path, which he was quite sure was the one made by Dick Harvey. There was his foot, and here and there he had broken branches and sat down, and once he had climbed a tree—all this Custaloga saw as clearly as if he had been by his side all the day.

At length he came to an open clearing, and here he saw at once there had been a fearful and terrible struggle. There had been rolling on the ground, and knives had been used, and blood had been shed, and then there was the step of Harvey clearly defined, with the lighter feet of Indians by his side. And then there was a little moccasins, almost infantine, which made Custaloga start and look round anxiously. It was, however, but for a moment, and then he bounded on his way, as a bright, sunny, and pleasant thought seemed to cross his mind.

He had not advanced two hundred yards when he was startled by a low strange sound quite new in the woods, the suppressed chanting of an Indian girl, for such he knew her to be by her words, her voice, and manner. Treading now with all the caution of a serpent, his heart beating wildly, his brain on fire, he continued moving for about five minutes, and then peering through the bushes, looked on a scene quite new to him, with all his woodland experience.

It was an arid piece of land, stony and bare, with a little stream on one side, and on the other a huge tree, which had fallen years before, uprooted by some gale, and lay there rotting and decaying, giving, however, new life to a host of parasitical plants, ivy, wild vine, and moss, that made it look like a green bank rather than a log.

About eight yards distant, standing beside a tree which concealed this fallen monarch of the forest from her, was an Indian girl, whose short tunic displayed limbs, shoulders, and arms, modeled as if by the hand of a sculptor, so round, so perfect were they in their dusky beauty. Her hands were clasped as if in agony and she gazed at

something before her, which evidently excited both grief and awe in her bosom, for she chanted her monotonous and conventional song of grief in a way quite new to Custaloga.

But he was creeping round the clearing with stealthy and anxious step, his heart almost in his mouth, as he distinctly saw before the girl, on the ground, the body of an Indian, with his head placed on his breast, having been severed from the body by a knife, after the horrid desecration of scalping.

But Custaloga was too bent on his task to care so much as he would have done at another time for the sight he saw. He thought of nothing then but making the girl a prisoner; and so rapt was she at the spectacle before her, that he rushed to within six or seven yards of her before she saw him. Then she gave a little, low cry, but made no attempt to run, knowing too well that her sex was little protection, while the Indian garb of Custaloga also deceived her.

"What is my sister doing in the woods?" asked Custaloga, gently.

"She is very sad, and she has hid herself, that her friends may not see her weep," replied the girl without hesitation.

She had recognized the paint of a Wyandot of an inimical branch.

"And why is my sister sad?" said Custaloga.

"Water Lily is a chief's daughter—and next moon she was to be the wife of Tecumseh—but Tecumseh is a great warrior"—this was said very proudly,—and has taken many prisoners—one a daughter of the pale-faces, and Tecumseh says that she is more beautiful than Water Lily, and sings sweeter, and Tecumseh looks darkly at Water Lily, and she was ashamed to weep, so she came and hid herself in the woods."

"Girl of the Shawnees," said Custaloga, earnestly, "the daughter of the Long-knives is my friend. She saved me when I was a prisoner. I must save her—help me, and Tecumseh will have no vail before his eyes—he will see that Water Lily is very fair."

"Wagh!" exclaimed the girl, laughing; "the Wyandot warrior loves the pale-face girl himself."

Had not Custaloga been thickly painted, his face would indeed have exhibited the deep crimson blush of shame, at having by his eagerness seemed to convey an idea, the very last he could have wished to find promulgated in that part of the world.

"Her father is my friend, her sister is my friend, her brother is my friend; I must take the little bird back to its nest. My sister loves Tecumseh—she will go back to the village, and she will tell the pale-face girl that her friends are near, and in the evening Water Lily will bring her out for a walk in the woods."

The girl shook her head at these propositions of treason against her tribe; but Custaloga immediately changed the subject for a moment.

"Does my sister know why this Shawnee has his head on his breast?"

"No," said the girl with a shriller; "I was hiding in the woods when ten warriors passed with a white prisoner, and I began to follow, when I heard a noise, and another Shawnee ran by, and then I heard a blow, a groan, and Water Lily ran up and saw this."

"Hist!" exclaimed Custaloga, in a low and determined voice, seizing the girl's arm. "Come—quick."

The girl showed a wounded foot, which made walking almost impossible. But he hesitated not a moment, caught her in his arms, bounded into the thicket, and then with a sternness and decision unusual in Custaloga, he bound her to a tree, sitting, and actually gagged her, which ungallant proceeding the girl submitted to without a struggle. She was a prisoner in the hands of the enemy, and she must resign herself to her fate.

Custaloga had heard distinct voices of Indians coming back on

the trail, as if to look after the absent one, who had been sent to fetch a forgotten hatchet of a chief, which having found, he darted back, utterly ignorant that behind him was running an avenging spirit which was soon to destroy and annihilate.

Custaloga hastily chewed some leaves, placed them on the girl's wounded foot, and bound them on with some rag he kept for wadding. He was engaged in this act of humanity, when a yell of unusual ferocity and savage surprise made him start to his feet. Four Shawnees were standing round the dead body of their fellow so fearfully mutilated, and on whose body not a sign of other wound appeared than that which had severed the head from the trunk.

A moment of silent awe succeeded the cry, and then away came the Indians, darting toward the cover where Custaloga was concealed, and to which they were directed by the track of his moccasins, heavier than usual, both from the dampness of the ground and the weight of the girl.

The Wyandot leveled his rifle and fired. Despite the danger of his position, he gave a loud cry of astonishment and surprise as his shot appeared to be echoed, and two Indians fell to the ground. The other two halted and looked around in every direction. Both were about to dart to cover, when a third shot startled them still more, and one, the only one capable of flight, bounded into the thicket near the stream and disappeared.

Then Custaloga saw the bushes and foliage which covered the old log begin to quiver and shake, a head appeared, and then, his eyes flashing, his whole mien that of a man worked up to a pitch of unearthly excitement, came forth the Silent Hunter, with a gun in each hand, his own rifle and that of the wretched Indian he had slain.

With a low growl like that of a beast of prey, he bounded across the little open glade, dropped his guns, and dispatched the three wounded Indians, after which he did unto them as he had done to the first, the whole time growling and muttering in a ferocious manner. Custaloga, used as he was to scenes and deeds of blood during forty-eight hours, turned away horror-struck to load his rifle.

A shriek of fear, a painful, shrill cry awoke him from a train of earnest thought. To turn, to catch the Silent Hunter by the neck, and cast him to the earth, was the work of an instant, and that instant saved the life of the Indian girl, whom the maddened and bereaved husband and father was about to sacrifice with apparently even more pleasure than he felt in slaying the ruthless warriors.

The Silent Hunter rose growling and glancing at Custaloga with savage and ferocious disappointment.

"My brother is a brave—his heart is very sad for the death of his wife, and he will kill the red-man whenever he finds him; but the Water Lily is the prisoner of Custaloga—she will help him to save Amy Moss—and then, if my brother's heart is very sad because of his wife and little ones, let him be a man, and not a dog of a Shawnee—he will kill no woman, he will kill no children, for his wife and his little ones' sake."

As Custaloga spoke in his softest and most winning tones, the face of the bereaved man grew less fierce, his eyes softened, and then the big tears rolled down his cheek, tears accompanied by sobs of the most heart-rending character. Then he grasped the hand of the Wyandot, and turning toward the girl, patted her softly on the head, with a gentle and resigned mien which quite reassured his companion.

The girl looked and listened in astonishment. The four scalps which hung from his girdle surprised her much, while the words of Custaloga, and their effect on

the terrible enemy of her race—for such she saw he was, the man who cut off the heads of her people after scalping them—were to her almost incomprehensible. Custaloga now ungagged her, and even untied her.

"Water Lily," said he, "is a daughter of the Riven Oak—her word is the word of an Indian girl who never lied."

"Water Lily is the daughter of Riven Oak," she replied, proudly, and with a start.

"And the daughter of Riven Oak has not forgotten her little friend Eagle Eye."

"Custaloga!" cried Water Lily, who had not seen him in his Indian paint for years.

"Custaloga," said the young Indian, proudly.

"My brother came into the camp at night to steal a singing bird, and he killed many warriors," replied the girl sadly, shaking her head mournfully.

"I came because the Shawnees stole away the friend of my youth," said Custaloga. "Ten suns ago Custaloga had never slain a man."

This boast, uttered in an earnest and mournful tone, made the Water Lily start, because such a boast was not in keeping with her ideas of valor and bravery, while it made the wretched owner of Crow's Nest—once so happy and joyous—shudder; for what a change had come over him within forty-eight hours!

Custaloga now narrated to Harrod, in brief words, all that had passed since his departure from the gully. The backwoodsman listened with deep attention, and whenever the young Indian told of the death of a Shawnee, he testified his satisfaction by an approving grunt.

When he had concluded, he intimated his intention of following up the Indians, but not upon the same trail. He explained to the Silent Hunter his views with regard to the Water Lily, who was to be sent into her village with the distinct understanding that she was to assist in the escape of Amy. The Silent Hunter grimly smiled at the name of Amy, and intimated by signs his willingness to do any thing which could be useful to one whose kindness to his wife had brought her to her present terrible and all but hopeless position.

Having decided that a certain course of proceeding should be taken to bring about the escape of Amy, the three started. The girl, who was very light, was carried by the powerful backwoodsman, her wound being too painful to admit of her walking. Custaloga went first with two guns, then came the Silent Hunter, his rifle on his back, and the girl carried in his arms. And thus they disappeared beneath the leafy arches of the forest.

About ten minutes later, seven Indians, with Harvey unarmed, and his hands tied behind his back, appeared on the clearing. Fearful indeed was their yell when they found the terrible report of the fugitive true, and saw four bodies mutilated on the field, while not all their ingenuity could find more than one trail, and this directly toward their own village.

Not one man proposed to follow this trail. A shudder ran through the whole group, and Harvey at once became convinced that they ascribed this wholesale slaughter to some mysterious agency quite new in the woods. He guessed the truth; but the stout-hearted painter, who had fallen a victim to his anxiety relative to Custaloga, took care not to undecieve his fierce and relentless captors, who now shrieked in his ears, with redoubled vehemence, their threats of torture, the stake, and all those fearful devices which the red-skins have invented to daunt and terrify their enemies.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GLEN HUT INTERVIEW.

IN all countries and in every clime there are persons of a pecu-

liar character of mind, who would be miserable if they were not permitted to believe in things supernatural, in the visible manifestation of the demon, and in the re-appearance on earth of the uneasy spirits of the dead. Persons in this state of peculiar purgatory are generally described as wandering about the scene of their first life, and as taking a grim delight in annoying all such individuals as think proper to dwell there. A ghost is one of those luxuries which mankind even yet seem unwilling to do without, and there would be no evil in it, if it were a harmless luxury. But it is not. It makes people very weak and very foolish, and disarranges the relations of society. Who will live in a haunted house? Give a residence a bad name, a reputation of more inhabitants than can be taken in a census of flesh and blood, and flesh and blood will not bear it.

Now, near a portion of that very stream where Harrod and Harvey concealed themselves with Custaloga, at an early period of our tale, there was a place which was known as the Haunted Pool.

Close to the edge of the stream, and at the foot of a steep bank, was the Glen Hut, a log-house of small dimensions, which had once been the center of several others that were now in ruins.

It was about two miles from the Frog's Hole.

Just as the stars began to twinkle, there came gliding along the trees a form of one who seemed familiar with the place. It was a woman, one could see from the step and manner, and in another moment she entered the hut, where a few minutes later sparkled a fire.

The interior of the hut was partly overgrown by weeds. The wooden shutters had fallen, and the fireplace was all that remained whole. Some straw and sticks soon made a blaze, and the girl seated herself on a stool. It was Kate. She was very pale and very thoughtful.

She started suddenly as she heard a rustling noise.

"Who is there?" she cried, in a determined tone, feeling for her pistol. The woods had made that noble girl a heroine.

"Is this the Frog's Hole?" said a husky voice.

"No," replied Kate, "the Frog's Hole is two miles along the west track, which has doubtless brought you here. Pass on, whoever you be."

As Kate spoke she made her pistol click.

"Horrite," exclaimed the stranger, retreating precipitately, "go on, gov'nor. We're hor rite! The Frog's Hole ain't more nor a mile ahead. This here is a hout and hout country. I wishes I were selling rags in Lunnon. Never mind, Corny—it's hor rite, do yer dooty."

The man disappeared, and the sound of two men galloping along the trail was soon heard. Ten minutes later, there was again the sound of hoofs. Kate started, and retreated into the corner of the hut. A man in a cloak entered rapidly.

"Well, Regin," said he, fiercely, "what is the meaning of all this?"

When the man came up to the hut, the girl had drawn her cloak close around her. She now cast her hood back and confronted Squire Barton.

"Ralph Regin values his ease and his comfort too much, Squire Barton, to come out on such an errand," she said.

"Kate, dear Kate!" replied the other, changing his tone.

"Sir," said Kate firmly, "I came here to answer any questions you may have to put relative to the business you have on hand with Ralph Regin."

"What means this change of tone?" asked the squire.

"Squire Barton," said Kate, "it means that I am a silly. Ask girl no longer. When I was but a child, I saw you; you talked to me of love; you were the only

educated man I had ever seen—your tongue was forked and cunning, and I listened favorably to your addresses. You asked to make me your wife. I was proud of the honor of being the lady of Scowl Hall, and, impelled by Ralph Regin, I consented. Then you cooled. It seems you then had met Amy Moss, whose wealth, position, and beauty were greater than those of the child whom Ralph Regin called daughter. You cheated me long with promises, you deluded my ear with cunning speech and I believed you. But recent events prove to me that you are playing a false though deep game. You have not found this Amy Moss so easy to win as you thought, and you have employed Indians to steal her away; you have roused a terrible war on the borders. Why?"

"Kate, you misunderstand me—I am striving to rescue Miss Amy Moss."

"Hush! No falsehoods, Squire Barton. That was a contrivance to win the favors of her and her family—you have been balked. The Indians have found the value of the prize."

"Curse them! This is some trick of Ralph Regin," exclaimed Barton, fiercely.

"It may or may not be. But listen, Squire Barton—this is our last interview. No wounded vanity, no womanly jealousy makes me act thus. I am resolved. I have not one faint remnant of affection left for you. It has cost me a sore struggle, but reason has assumed its sway. I have resolved to be the wife of an honest man, be he who he may. All speech, Mr. Barton, is vain. Tell me your business with that man, whose house I shall soon leave."

"But, wild and foolish girl—that man is your father."

"That man is not my father, and that woman is not my mother," said Kate, haughtily. "I know not who my parents are."

"If," muttered Barton, as an idea crossed his mind, "if she were a boy, I should mistrust the knaves—but why indulge such silly fancies? Why is not Ralph here to-night?"

"He knew the refusal of Tecumseh to give up the girl would make you furious."

"Furious!" said Barton; "it drives me mad. I know not what to do. That Indian knave declines my presents, all."

"Trust that Custaloga may save her," said Kate.

"Sooner let her die."

"Bad, selfish, man! Oh heaven! that I could ever have loved this man!" cried Kate, passionately.

"You did love me," said Barton, quietly, "and will again."

"Lay it, Barton, to your soul. I did love you. I would have given my life to have served or pleased you; your wish was law. I admired, I respected you. When I ceased to respect you, I began to cease to love you. Now I do not hate—I pity you."

"Beware, girl—this language to me is weak. You are a poor and helpless girl."

"I am; therefore I am in the hands of God—of that God whom you have outraged, and in Him I put my trust. Do you not too long defy Him, James Barton?"

"Peace, babbling fool!" cried Barton, furiously. "Go; leave me! Tell Ralph Regin not to brave me. I am not one played with with impunity. That he has had some hand in disarranging my plans, I feel. Tell him so, and let him beware—"

"I go, James Barton," said Kate, in a low, sad tone; "but think not I fear your threats. Ralph Regin is, like yourself, a dark and fearful man, and may do so. This is our last meeting. Good-night! and again take warning by me—repent ere it is too late."

And Kate brushed past him and went out into the open air.

"Confound the girl!" he exclaimed; and then he added, with a deep sigh, "Nothing serves me. I did love this bold child of the

woods, but her pretty face could not answer my purpose. Why, why, have I entered on this false and hollow career? Amy hates me; this girl despises me. Ha! ha! ha! Well they may! I hate and despise myself. But let me shake off this weakness. I must see Simon Girty, and plan some scheme at any peril to release her. If so, 'tis better as it is. She can suspect nothing. But she hates me. Never mind. I have her promise. She dare not break that!"

He mounted his horse, and setting spurs to the animal, galloped away in the direction of Scow Hall.

He had no sooner disappeared than Kate returned, and re-entered the hut.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TWO ALTERNATIVES.

THE condition of Amy Moss was any thing but agreeable or satisfactory while these varied incidents already noted were occurring in different parts of the woods. She had heard and understood the tumult of the night, and it was with vague and wild horror that she waited for some event which should explain to her the fate of her generous and devoted friend, Custaloga. As soon as it was daylight she arose, and taking the child by the hand, and signing to the Indian woman to follow her—for Tecumseh had plainly intimated that she was an attendant as well as a spy—she went forth into the village, which was now once more calm. The warriors were lying within their wigwams, and not even the occasional return of some of the young men who had gone forth to chase Custaloga roused them from their apathy. These braves went quietly to their tents without communicating with any one, reserving their explanations for a council of the whole village, which it was well known would take place in the course of the morning, according to previous arrangement.

Seen by daylight, the village presented any thing but an agreeable aspect. There were a number of wigwams of bark and skin, whence arose, in one or two instances, a light wreath of smoke, as if domestic hands were preparing for the early morning meal. The richly variegated forest was all around, save where a clearing showed several cultivated fields, but the inclosure within the palisades was unsightly; there were patches of scrubby grass, numerous spots where fire had blackened the ground, and here and there a stunted bush, a pile of wood, or a log, while the whole was so trodden down by the hoofs of horses and the feet of men, as to resemble a dirty farm-yard rather than a lawn. Numerous ugly-looking curs lay about, still sleeping, but raising their heads at intervals to snarl at the passer-by. At no great distance from one of the entrances of the village, but at some considerable distance from the lodges of the Indians, was the horse-corral, within which they kept those valuable animals, which were in nearly every case the produce of plunder.

"Aunt Amy," whispered the child, clinging to the skirts of the girl, whose tasteful habiliments, though torn and dirty, seemed strange in that wild place, "when shall we go to papa?"

"Hush!" replied Amy, who, as she saw the child's pale and anxious face turned up to her, could scarcely restrain her tears; "we must wait. Your father and Custaloga and Dick Harvey will be here soon, and take us away from these bad people."

"I do want to see papa," said the child; but, under the weight of alarm and dread at the Indians, it remained silent after giving utterance to a cry which is the cry of nature and of love—and no cry of nature is deeper or warmer than that of a child for its father.

Amy Moss made no reply, but having gained the gate of the inclosure, went out, crossed a small open barn, and entered the forest

where, near a pure and clear and pellucid spring, which formed a pool, she performed her ablutions, bathed the child's feet, and, as well as she could, in obedience to custom, smoothed her glossy hair and performed her toilette. The old Indian woman, who, like most of the aged crones of the village, and indeed like most Indian women, despised such niceties, looked on with a contemptuous scowl, but made no remark, as young Tecumseh had ordered her to be peculiarly attentive and obedient to the prisoners.

When this simple and refreshing morning duty was performed Amy returned toward the village. She walked slowly and thoughtfully, still holding the child's hand, and had fallen into a reverie, when a shriek from the child alarmed her, and she looked up.

The young chief, who had originally made her a prisoner, stood before her.

He was a tall and rather handsome Indian, with an expression of countenance, which at the present moment was mild and gentle. He wore a kind of tiara of badgers' hairs, with the beak and claws of a buzzard, and on his blanket were silver brooches and coins to indicate his bravery or ornament. He was wholly unarmed.

"Tecumseh is glad," he said, in a soft, low, and melancholy voice—for this man was an adept in the ways and arts of eloquence, which oft depends as much on voice and manner as on words—"the sight of the nightingale is good. The air is fresh, and there are roses on the white-lily's cheeks. Go, Wass, take the little pale-skin; Tecumseh will speak with the daughter of the Long-knives."

All this while Amy Moss had not moved. She had listened to the warrior's words, and they had entered into her soul. She began to suspect why she had been preserved, and her heart sunk within her. Proud of her fair skin, proud of her race, and looking on negroes and Indians as an inferior class of beings, of a naturally haughty character, educated by a mother who boasted of descent from some Norman nobles on the roll of Battle Abbey, Amy Moss had for some time past cooled in her superb and protective friendship toward Custaloga, because she had fancied a slight and almost imperceptible amount of admiration had become mingled with his previous humble, and grateful friendship. She saw, with a woman's keen and almost unerring instinct, the first faint dawn of passion in the Indian, and pitilessly, mercilessly had she overpowered him with her cool sarcasm, her withering and bitter scorn, her sharp and stinging woman's anger. She had often talked before him with contempt of women who had given way to silly passion and made unequal matches; she had sought every occasion to allude with biting sarcasm to men who demeaned themselves by marrying quadroons and half-castes. Beautiful as a queen, majestic in her mien, with flashing eyes and burning cheeks had she rejected, in her view of man, all who were not of her own color, and immediate race. And Custaloga had fled once before it, but he had come back to meet it all again, and bear it silently, calmly, without anger—without evidence, indeed, that he knew of the existence of such a sentiment.

What, then, were her feelings now?

"Go," said she to the child, "I will be with you directly. Wass will give you something to eat."

Then she turned and confronted the Indian with a calm exterior of face, which, however, the heaving of her bosom, the flashing of her eyes, and the red spot in the middle of her cheek, showed was but apparent. As she stood erect, her straw hat across her arm, her mien one of semi-defiance, she looked so lovely, that the Indian could scarcely restrain a cry of admiration. He controlled himself, however, and motioned her to take a seat.

There are moments in life when exterior objects assume a shape and form which is fixed on the mind with such power and distinctness that they are never forgotten. It was but a path in the forest, a narrow path leading to the spring where Amy Moss had performed her ablutions, and she sat down on a log; but never, never, during the years of life that were given to her did Amy forget the scene. Each tree, each bush, each green blade of grass, every stone that dotted the path, lived in her memory. A ray of morning sunlight fell full upon the half-green, half-black surface of a dead bough—here a spot, and there a spot, like the speckled back of a snake or panther. An ant crept up along the branch with a tiny bit of straw in its mouth, running hurriedly, as if the great and famed devourer of his race were close behind. A bird stood twittering upon a tree-top merrily, cheerily. Amy saw and heard it all, and took it in as with a glance of instant thought.

The maple tree is sweet, and it sends forth pleasant sap, which the cunning white makes into sugar; but the mouth of a woman is sweeter, and the honey on her lips is richer than the sugar of the pale-faces. An Indian girl is an Indian girl—she was born to wait upon her warrior; her young chief comes back and tells her there is meat of his killing in the woods, and her heart is glad, and she goes and fetches it. It is because her blood and her heart are both red—her blood is warm—she is proud of her chief. She loves to see him go on the war-path; the screams of his enemies are music to her ears—the scalps at his waist are as jewels to her neck—she is the mother of braves—she puts a scalping-knife in the hand of her little babe and she laughs—she shows him the tomahawk, and mother and child are pleased, and the heart of a warrior is glad, because he knows that his wife will give him only little warriors. The daughter of the pale-faces is not so—she is nursed in a warm wigwam—she is petted—she is like the panther of the woods—the foxes bow to her, and she is very beautiful—she is not meant to wait on warriors—the weight of a deer would break her little bones—the sight of blood would make her faint; but she is very beautiful. Tecumseh is a young warrior—he is the son of a great chief—his heart is glad, he has seen the song-bird of the whites—there is one chief's daughter in his wigwam, and the Blue-bird will be there next noon—they can wait on him, because they are Indian girls, and they are proud—but the singing-bird of the whites is very beautiful—she will be the queen of Chillicothe, the master of Tecumseh's heart, and the mother of braves—let her speak."

"Indian," said Amy, coldly, who had drunk in every word of his speech, "I do not understand you."

"I have said," replied the young Indian warrior, with quiet dignity, as if he thought he had already demeaned himself sufficiently.

"I do not understand you—explain yourself."

"An Indian warrior does not speak twice," said Tecumseh with flashing eyes.

"Let him then speak plainly once," replied Amy, with bitter sarcasm.

"Child of the pale-faces, you are my wife, I have said."

"Wife!" exclaimed Amy, rising and standing before him with angry mien and flashing eyes, while she raised her hands to heaven to reject the sacrifice—"wife, did you say? Indian, I have read of your tortures, I have heard of your demon-cruelties, I have been told of victims burnt at the stake—I think I see them now—beaten with switches. Take me, burn me at the stake, try all your tortures, beat, whip, burn, drag me to death; but never, never will I be an Indian's wife. I loathe your race, I detest your skin. I am a white girl; a white and Christian girl I

nave lived, and a white and Christian girl I will die!"

"Talk much—do little," replied the Indian coldly, and even sternly.

"Try me—I wish to die," replied Amy, who was in that state of excitement and frenzy which has made many a martyr; "to die would be pleasant. An Indian!" and she made a sign of profound and superb contempt.

The chief looked at her with glaring eyes, and fierce, wild passion; but he checked the ebullition of rage that was on his lips, and said:

"Singing-bird talk too much. Which best, Indian brave or white Indian renegade?—Why your life save?—Think nobody tell do it?—What say, marry Simon Girty?"

"Indian," said Amy Moss, wildly clutching his arm, "there is dark meaning in your words; but rather than be given over to that monster—yes, if I could not die, I would be your wife."

"Wagh!" replied Tecumseh, with a laugh—the vindictive, cunning laugh of an Indian—"know little bird sing another tune by-and-by," using a favorite English word of the red-skins.

"Indian, what mean you? Speak. Why am I here?" she cried.

The Indian gazed at her with a look of savage triumph, but would give no other explanation. He pointed to the path before him and bade her follow it. Amy, recovering herself and re-assuming all her proud mien, walked deliberately before him to the camp, crossing which, she rejoined the child, who was anxiously awaiting her return.

Her feelings were so highly wrought by the scene with the Indian, that though, while walking in the open air, she had controlled her suffering and agitation, no sooner was she concealed within the welcome shelter of a lodge than she sunk exhausted on her bed. The child, alarmed, crept to her side, and with many an endearing caress—such caresses as children only understand—asked her if she was ill, if he could do any thing for her. For a minute or two she did not reply, then she again roused herself and conversed gently with the child, joined it in its breakfast, and endeavored as far as possible to be cheerful.

Hours passed, during which Amy remained quietly within her tent, allowing the child to breathe the fresh air in front. The sun rose in the heavens, the warriors assembled in council, and then there was a rush and a cry of astonishment, and some horsemen came into the camp. The tidings they brought were of importance, it seemed, for there was loud talking, high words, and movings to and fro; and then there was such a yell of frenzied delight and pleasure, that Amy Moss rushed before the entrance of the wigwam, followed by the aged crone who watched her, just in time to see a small party of Indians who had that minute entered the camp.

In their midst was a prisoner.

Her heart misgiving her much, her mind agitated and full of anxiety, she ran toward the group, holding the child. So excited were the Indians, that they allowed her to approach close enough to discover that the prisoner was no other than her friend, Dick Harvey. Tecumseh made a rapid sign to the warriors to allow the meeting.

"Richard Harvey!" she exclaimed, for Amy was never familiar, "how is this?"

"Well, Miss Moss, it's my own fault. Custaloga did tell me to keep close, and I didn't. I'm sorry, because I did hope to help you away. Where's Custaloga?"

"He has been here—I have seen him, and he has escaped," replied Amy. "But how is all this? What is the meaning of it all?"

"It means," said Dick Harvey, who, though polished in the quality of his discourse to the ladies of the Moss, was never so in the quantity—and who spoke the more readily that he thought the interview permitted from human-

ity, little suspecting that those who understood English were listening for every sound—"it means that I and Custa overheard Spiky Jonas agree down by the Blue Spring to let that tall Indian by your side, who looks like a pine, he is so wooden, enter the Moss. We ran away to the judge and gave the alarm. Then we came up here, and I, like a fool, got taken."

"Are all well, Richard Harvey?" asked Amy, in tremulous tones.

"All are well, the judge, Miss Jane, Charles, and the squire," replied Harvey.

"The squire is safe in the Moss, I suppose," said Amy, with a curl of the lip.

"Well, to give the—I mean, to be just to Squire Barton, he did want to come, but Custaloga would not let him."

Tecumseh here interfered, and in cold tones bade Amy go back to her tent, while Dick Harvey, despite the manful way in which he tried to struggle, was removed to another part of the camp. The poor fellow was so bound that his resistance was not very effectual; but what he wanted in physical force he made up in speech, for he called the Indians by more names than ever their astonished ears had listened to before. The Shawnees, however, paid no attention to his objurgations, but drove him before them to a wigwam, into which he was thrust, and his feet tied. There he was left to the dreadful reflections natural to a man under the circumstances, the full extent of the misery of which can only be conceived by those who have lived among the Indians, and realized their savage style of warfare.

Amy moved toward her tent with the child, and was about to enter it, when the shadow of a man crossed her path, and looking up, she saw a rough and coarse-looking being standing in her way. He was not an Indian, however, and she gazed at him as if expecting him to speak.

"I can't say much, miss," he said, in a rough but seemingly hearty way, "but don't be afraid. You'll be out of this I guess, to-night."

"Who and what are you?" asked Amy Moss, fixing her great eyes upon him inquiringly.

"Well, my name ain't mighty liked in these parts—I'm Simon Girty, I am."

"Simon Girty!" said the girl, with horror depicted in every feature.

"Don't be skeared, miss," exclaimed the other, without manifesting any very great surprise at her undisguised disgust. "But it's all right. I'm paid to help you out by one as can pay, and I'll do my duty."

"By whom are you paid?" asked Amy, whose face was crimson, and who looked at him with a look that searched his very soul.

"Well! I expect you guess—by the squire. He's the man as can do it. None of your canting sneaking, Indian Custas."

"Simon Girty, out of my way—I will not owe life or liberty to the squire, and you may tell him so. You may tell him more than this, that I have fulfilled to the letter my part of the contract—let him keep to his. Assistance from him is an outrage."

With these words Amy passed on, and entered her tent, where she sat down in a corner, wrapped in deep and earnest thought. Vague fancies passed through her mind. Wild notions, scarcely ever embodied in words by her afterward, because she never explained the compact to which she alluded—one to which only a scrupulous respect for her word made her keep. The suspicions she had were so terrible that she was alarmed. She began to understand the allusions of the Indian chief—she began to comprehend why she had been spared at the Crow's Nest, and her very soul revolted.

It may now be stated that Amy Moss hated the squire with a hate which would not have existed, had

she not been bound to marry him. If she had been free from this part of the contract, she would simply have despised him. But from what will probably, when the time comes for explanation, be considered a pure infatuation, Amy felt bound in honor to marry this man. And yet we have said she hated him, and none knew it—not Jane, not her father, not Dick Harvey, not a friend—none save Custaloga, who surmised and suspected, that is all, and who was from that very cause lost in amazement, which not all his ingenuity could unravel.

Amy Moss now firmly believed that she had been taken by orders of Squire Barton, who had done so from the desire of using the miserable expedient of winning her favor by a sham rescue.

To tell the thoughts, the resolutions, the doubts, the fears, the sufferings of that noble girl, would be to exhaust the vocabulary of human agony. She suffered as she had never suffered before. She saw herself drawn into toils, from which there seemed no escape; and such were the secret aspirations, ideas, and thoughts, of Amy Moss, that had she been born of any other race than the Anglo-Saxon, had she been a believer in any creed save the pure and elevated doctrines of true Christianity, she would have resolved to end the contest in some such way as Lucrezia Borgia was wont to end her quarrels.

And a contest—a fearful one—was going on between the innocent and noble girl, the lofty, impetuous and warm nature of Amy, and the subtle, seared man of the world—a contest that could not have lasted one hour, had she been a little less bound by a keen and nice sense of honor, from which she had determined never to depart, even if a fate as horrible as can well be imagined awaited her—that of marrying a man she hated.

The day passed away, small bands of warriors went out, scouts came and departed, the usual bustle of an Indian camp in wartime was visible, and all seemed so engaged that nothing was done that day with regard to the prisoners. Amy saw Tecumseh once or twice, and fancied that he was unusually grave. The mind at such times is keenly alive to suspicion, and the suspicion did cross the mind of the young girl, that the Indian warrior, struck by a passion as sudden as it was violent, and likely to be short-lived, had determined to break faith with the man who had employed him.

It was hard to say whether Amy Moss was pleased or grieved at this reflection.

Her future was a dark and dreary blank, so dreary that our heroine scarcely clung to life as the young do usually; and yet the idea of becoming the squaw of an Indian chief was at the same time so repulsive, so disgusting, and so near, that the other idea, though equally painful, being remote, and by this fact capable of ending by the many accidents of life, was on the instant less abhorrent to her soul.

Then she thought of her father and her sister, and of the poor artist, and then by a natural train of ideas, of Custaloga; and Amy fell into a kind of pleasing reverie as she thought of the gallant young Wyandot, who devoted himself to her rescue from the purest motives of seemingly fraternal affection, and she felt pained and vexed at herself for all the coolness and haughtiness she had manifested toward him.

Night came with rapid steps, most of the Indians returned from their excursions, scouts and sentinels were placed around the palisades, and then all relapsed into stillness at an earlier hour than usual, which made Amy suspect that some serious movement was intended for the morrow at an early hour. Simon Girty she saw no more of after her brief and startling interview with that worthy, whose name is familiar to the students of border life precisely be-

cause it stands out in dark relief against such names as those of Boone, Kenton, Wetzel, Brady, and others.

Next day, about two hours after sunrise, Amy wandered again toward the brook or spring where her interview with Tecumseh had taken place. She was still followed by the old woman, who, however, came not all the way, but sat down upon the log, whence she could just catch a glimpse of her prisoners. By no means sorry to be rid of the surveillance of this aged and disagreeable crone, Amy Moss, to whom the child was a consolation and comfort, hurried along with her prattling charge toward the pool, and there sat down to eat the breakfast of corn and cakes and meat, which the munificence of the warrior provided.

Just as they began to take their simple meal, the clang of horses' hoofs was heard coming down the opposite slope—a clang of horses' hoofs which made her heart leap, though it could forebode no good. She was about to rise, when she distinctly heard a crackling in the bushes close at hand, the sound of a light footstep, and then the boughs were parted, and the merry, laughing face of an Indian girl was seen. She looked an instant at the little group, and then came and sat down by the side of Amy.

The old woman appeared to recognize her, for she made no motion as if to interfere, and she retained her former position.

"So, you child," said the Indian girl, laughing, "like have little warrior—eh?"

And she clapped her hands as Amy frowned and looked rather surprised at this abrupt style of discourse.

"Me your friend," continued the Indian girl, and then she added proudly, "you no love Tecumseh?"

"Most certainly not!" exclaimed Amy, with a vehemence not to be mistaken.

"Tecumseh great warrior—much better Custaloga," said the girl, gravely.

"In Heaven's name, girl!" exclaimed Amy, rather impatiently, "what do you mean?"

"Come from Custaloga—close by in woods—look out for Singing-bird."

"Girl," said Amy, clutching her hand, "are you a friend?"

"Tecumseh great warrior—all heart—love see Singing-bird—forget Blue-bird—Singing-bird go away—Tecumseh see Blue-bird gain—me friend then—help Singing-bird fly away."

Amy smiled, despite her danger. "So the fact is, you are to be Tecumseh's wife, and you fancy he wants to take a white squaw, and you want to get rid of me as fast as possible."

"Zackly," said the Indian girl, laughing heartily.

"I will go gladly," replied Amy; "but I fear it will not be easy; there are white men who wish to detain me. What is your name?"

After some further discourse the two young girls appeared thoroughly to understand each other, and it was agreed that they should await the signal agreed on between Custaloga and the girl before they commenced any decided proceeding. It had been arranged that the Indian girl was to saunter round the camp and rejoin Custa, who was, it appeared, close in the neighborhood.

With this understanding both returned to the camp.

There was a quiet and calm in the village, which appeared very strange, the more so that a horse well-caparisoned, which had evidently been ridden by a white man, stood before the principal wigwam, held by one of the tawny boys of the tribe.

Amy looked at this suspiciously, but she had little leisure to gratify her curiosity, as a warrior came sliding up and bade her enter her tent, and remain there for the present.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FOREST MARCH.

IN about a quarter of an hour she was joined by the Indian girl. Her face showed unmistakable evidence of uneasiness and grief. Amy saw clearly that some event new and untoward had occurred. Fortunately the old woman was outside the wigwam, at a sufficient distance to permit of undisturbed conversation.

"What is it?" asked Amy Moss, laying her hand on the girl's arm.

"Bad," began the Shawnee maiden, "bad pale-face and Indian quarrel—bad pale-face go away—angry—dig up hatchet—Shawnee break up camp and go. Two—six—eight minute go away."

"What can this mean?" said Amy, passing her hand over her brow. "I seem in a dream—and my friend and brother, the prisoner?"

"Know him too?" asked Blue-bird, anxiously, "know white brave—prisoner?"

"He is one of my best and noblest friends," replied Amy; "what is to be his fate?"

"He is a brave—he will know how to die like a brave," replied the Indian girl in her turn.

"Die, did you say?—Richard Harvey die? It can not be; it is impossible, girl; they will not surely put him to death?" said Amy, wildly.

"Sister of the pale-faces, you are my friend; there is my hand. Blue-bird will save you if she can, but the warrior of the Long-knives must fight his own battle."

Amy bowed her head to conceal the terrible impression made by the words of the Indian girl, and at the same time the busy note of preparation struck upon her ear. The camp was breaking up. The horses were brought from the corral, women and children ran hither and thither with shrill cries, and our unfortunate heroine remarked with anxiety that all the females were collecting in a group in the center of the camp. In a few minutes a summons came from Tecumseh to Amy and Blue-bird to join the party. Amy obeyed, more chilled, more desolate, more overwhelmed with grief, than ever she had felt before. A moment before and she was cheered by hope. Now she was about to be led a captive she knew not whither.

Every moment her position seemed to be getting worse, and her naturally brave heart almost sunk within her, as the accumulation of perils crowded on her. In her strait she leaned with natural anxiety to the young Indian girl, who under such peculiar circumstances had become her friend. In the hour of peril, at the time when we cease to have confidence in ourselves, we turn naturally to those in whom we fancy a superior power resides. Hence, indeed, it is that the vainest and most defiant man will sometimes own the wondrous power of his Creator, and

"bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee,"

where, in his wild and wicked confidence, he once scarce yielded belief.

Poor Amy Moss, stricken and heart-broken at the simple hint of death being threatened to Harvey, after the first shock, then appealed to the Indian girl.

"My sister," said she, as she cowered in a corner with the child and Blue-bird, "can you not save my friend?"

"No save," replied the girl.

"Is Tecumseh, then, a monster?"

"Tecumseh great brave, warrior, good," said the young Shawnee, stamping her foot.

"I can see no bravery in killing an unarmed man," replied Amy, quickly; "it is cowardly."

"Child of the pale-faces," exclaimed Blue-bird, pressing her finger on her arm, "why you say that?—why pale-face kill brother pale-face, tie cord round neck, eh?"

"You speak of hanging," said Amy, with a shudder; "but we only hang murderers."

"Pale-faces hide 'bout camp—

kill Indians," reasoned the other; "he murderer to us."

Amy shuddered.

"But," cried the young captive, passionately, "he is incapable of harming any one—he is the most gentle, the most inoffensive of human beings."

"What he want down here—eh?—Why he carry gun—knife—eh?" said the girl, quickly.

"He is my friend, my brother; he came to rescue and save me."

"No talk—girl got no power—warrior not listen to her—he no hear."

Amy bowed her head and spoke no more for some time, gazing vacantly at the preparations of the Indians.

A long line of horses laden with the primitive furniture of an Indian village, on the summit of which children and young girls were seated; women, old and young, belonging to the married portion of the tribe; with some eight warriors, were all that were ready. The rest were collected round a common center, of which Amy suddenly caught a glimpse, and then sunk on the ground. It was Dick Harvey, surrounded by a gang of savages, dancing, yelling, and using all their diabolical and horrible devices to strike terror into his soul.

Scarcely had Amy sunk to the earth, when Tecumseh caught her in his arms, placed her on a horse with the child, and bade the caravan advance. Amy looked wildly round her as she recovered entire consciousness, and found herself already beneath the deep arches of the forest, one of a long cavalcade of women, not a warrior being visible. The friendly Indian girl walked at the head of her horse with a resigned and subdued mien. The future bride of a chief, she was as yet exempt from the hard labor which generally was the portion of her sex amid barbarous and savage nations.

Amy's heart grew desolate and sad, indeed, as she saw herself thus drawn away from that spot where her friends believed her to be, and where only their efforts would be directed to effect her release. She knew that a rescue now was all but hopeless, for though she saw not the grim forms of the warriors, she knew them to be scattered round the caravan in the usual way that scouts follow such a procession in the backwoods.

The course of the caravan was westerly at first, but then changed, always, however, sinking deeper and deeper beneath the heavy and overshadowed forest.

The progress of the party was exceedingly slow, as the horses were heavily laden, and some of the patient women, treated as mere beasts of burden by their lords and masters, were compelled every now and then to take rest. About six miles from the village, they came to a small rivulet at the foot of a slope covered with bushes, on the summit of which Amy distinctly saw the warriors who preceded the expedition show themselves a moment and then disappear. The women, however, in obedience to some previous arrangement, or from sheer lassitude and fatigue, proceeded to lay down their burdens and seek rest.

To Amy, the child, and the Indian girl, this halt was a relief; for the former got off the horse and sat down upon the sward, a little apart from the general group.

A brief description of the locality is necessary to a correct understanding of the events about to be recorded. For about fifty yards along the banks of the rivulet there were no trees. The clear open space between the water and the trees was about seven or eight yards, except toward the southern end, where the ground was narrowed by a sturdy growth of oaks, that projected a kind of spur of the forest into the clearing. On the edge of this, behind the trees, in search of shade, the party above alluded to sat down—Amy, to chatter a while with the child, which was beginning to weary and fret at this rude life; the Indian girl, to

look on with a smile at the picture presented to her of white domestic affection.

"Singing bird like children?" said the Indian girl, with a low and musical laugh.

"Very much," replied Amy, drawing the child to her and playing with its ringlets.

"Have pappoose own some day," continued Blue-bird, with a girlish giggle.

"I hope not," said Amy, slowly, and with an earnestness which made the Shawnee maiden stare. She bent her eyes to the ground as she spoke, and sighed deeply.

A kind of sigh, like an echo, was heard close at hand, a long-drawn breath of a man who had been running. The two girls heard it at the same minute, and looked around anxiously. The women were all lying near their bundles, the children were playing around them, and none were noticing the captives, sufficiently guarded it was thought by Blue-bird. Amy then ventured to speak.

"Is my friend near, or did my ears deceive me?" she said aloud, looking toward a bush at some distance.

"Custaloga is here," replied a voice; "be hopeful, the night will come and hide the step of those who run away. When night comes, be ready."

"I will be ready, Custa," she said; "but have you tidings of Richard Harvey?"

"None," said the voice, in a sad tone; "he is in the hand of God."

"They have kept him at the camp, I fear, to apply the torture. Could he not be saved?"

"I will try," said the other, quietly. "Is that the child of Walter Harrod?"

"It is, and Providence could not have given me a more welcome companion," said Amy.

At that instant, the bushes a little way from where Custaloga spoke were moved on one side, and a pale and haggard face protruded. It was the face of the Silent Hunter.

"My pa!" shrieked the child, catching a glimpse of its father.

A rapid movement on the part of Custaloga and the Silent Hunter followed this unfortunate exclamation, which caused two or three women to start to their feet and move toward the group. Amy, however, with great presence of mind, came slowly to meet them, and succeeded in disarming any suspicion. At that instant, however, a cry of horror, a yell of wild and savage fury burst upon their ears, and the whole body of scouts came rushing in. Then a warrior, frantic and horror-stricken, drew them to a place not more than fifteen yards from the camp, where lay the body of an Indian, a headless trunk, the head scalped and placed on the breast, and a knife-wound at his heart.

The deed was one so audacious, so ferocious, and so inexplicable, that a panic flew round the camp, and the whole body of Indians came running in, not one even starting on the usual searching expedition in pursuit of enemies who must be at hand. Amy started with a look of wild astonishment when she saw Spiky Jonas in company with the Alligator among the party.

"Jonas," she cried, "what do you here?"

"Yah! yah! Jonas no nigger now; he berry much betterer. He lef de Moss; he no more wait on de proud men—yah!"

"Jonas, what mean you?—what is this? Is the Moss captured by the horrid Indians?" she cried, frantically. "What of my father, my sister, of Charles?"

The look of the negro became fiendish as she mentioned the name of Charles; he grinned a horrid grin of revenge and hate, but he did not speak.

"Will you answer, Jonas—what harm have I ever done you?" cried the unhappy girl.

"Miss Amy nebbur hurt dis child—no—and dis child nebbur hurt Miss Amy. All right at Moss; de ole man quite safe—Miss Jane

quite safe—but no speak ob Mr. Charles."

"Why not of Charles?—why not of my brother?"

"A nigger got heart like de oder man—why Massa Charles make lub to Flora?"

"Jonas!" said Amy, standing erect before him in all her womanly dignity, "what mean you?"

"Dat Spiky Jonas hate Massa Charles—him gib too much present to Flora—Flora her head turn—no look at dis child."

"Charles meant no harm. If Flora is weak and silly, that is no fault of his. But, Jonas, remember you were a boy when we were children, and you played with us; you will not turn against your old playmates?"

The negro looked at her with a strange look. There were tears in his eyes. He *did* recollect those happy, innocent days; he recollected them well, but he shook his head mournfully.

"No Flora for dis child—she nebbur be de companion for him. Flora too proud now—but dis child no hurt Miss Amy—nebbur fear; but Massa Charles—hab you ebber hate any one, Miss Amy?"

"Never! I have despised, I have never hated."

"Well, Jonas, he hate Massa Charles, hate de ugly red-skin Coosta, hate de painter, Massa Harvey."

"Hush, Jonas; you are mad. I am glad to hear you say all is well at home. We will speak again when you are calmer."

The negro turned away with an assumption of dignity, which he had already picked up from the Indians. Poor fellow! his wrongs—the wrongs of serfdom—were too deeply rooted, soon to be eradicated from his breast. It destroyed almost the gratitude and love he was inclined to feel for those who had been kind to him.

At this moment the signal for departure was given. The Indians, recovered from their panic, glanced with scowling eyes at the white woman and child, and were only kept from violent proceedings by the orders they had received from their chief to respect Amy under whatever circumstances they were placed. Amy rejoined the Indian girl, who had been gathering tidings of the events which had so startled them, and the journey was continued.

No circumstance worthy of record occurred during the remainder of that day, toward the close of which they reached the banks of the Ohio, and here a halt was at once declared.

The horses were staked, the fires were lit, scouts were sent round to search for the presence of enemies, and rude huts of boughs and branches were made. The party was amply supplied with game and food, so that hunting was unnecessary.

The camp was situated on a small patch of green, surrounded by trees, on the very water's edge, and so placed that the fires could only be seen by persons passing along the waters of the river. The women were congregated at one side of the temporary village, the men sat smoking on the other. All had supped, and there was much whispered talk of the fearful and mysterious way in which one of the party had been cut off by some unrelenting and daring foe. A foreshadowing of evil seemed to hang over the minds of the whole party. It was not the first of their race who had been thus destroyed, and the Shawnees could not but see some connection between this deed and the events of the few preceding days.

The murder of Clara—even to that ruthless race, which slays men, women, and children of the whites without mercy—which had been perpetrated under circumstances of unusual atrocity, and which was followed by such strange retribution, troubled the minds of those wild and savage men. They appeared to connect Amy with it, for they glanced strangely at her, and there were whispers of very significant import with regard to her.

She sat near the fire in whispered conference with the unfortunate boy who had so suddenly lost his mother. It was a comfort and a consolation to Amy to have something to love, something to lean on her, and she did lavish all the warmth of her heart on the helpless being which owed its life to her interference. The Indian girl sat a little distance off, watching them with a smile, though apparently deeply engaged in conversation with her companions.

Jonas and the Alligator were drinking together, apart from the rest, under a tall pine, on the very edge of the river, about twenty yards from the camp. They could be faintly seen in the dim light of the evening, while their talk was loud enough, their tongues being unloosed by the fire-water, which the red-skins consume with all the devotion of habitual and incurable sots. There was the knowing chuckle, the horse-laugh, the solemn effort at sobriety, the shrill disregard of harmony in certain attempts at song, which belong only to those who are old in the career of drunkenness. And both Jonas and the Alligator were old hands in the exercise of this degrading vice.

Suddenly a hist was heard through the camp, and dead silence prevailed. Even the whiskey drinkers listened with solemn attention. There were sounds of oars on the water, the oars too of a large boat, which could only be manned by white men, descending the river—some broad "flat" of a trader, journeying along in happy ignorance of the proximity of danger.

The warriors started to their feet, the fire was covered up, and the armed men glided away along the bank up-stream, in an opposite direction from where the convivial couple sat.

Then the voices of men talking were heard on the river, and Amy listened with breathless excitement. She knew it must be a party of her countrymen. Were they in sufficient numbers to cope with the Indians? or were they to fall victims to some deception or trickery? These thoughts passed rapidly through her mind as she heard the oars working steadily, and the men conversing with apparent ease and security. Suddenly the low silence was broken in a startling manner.

"Who camps on yon bank, eh?" said a manly voice; "friends or reptiles?"

"Friends," replied a guttural Indian voice from the wood.

"Friends," cried a voice angrily. "I know that for a Injine! here's for you."

A volley of rifles followed this intimation that the speaker was well acquainted with the trickery so often used to draw men on shore on the waters of the beautiful river. When first the voice was heard, the Indian girl had leaped forward, pushing Amy to the ground with the child, and had lain down herself by their side. The bullets came pattering a minute later amid the trees and bushes around, followed by a yell from the Indians, and then a general volley in reply.

"Come on, ye skulking knaves," cried a rich, laughing voice, "come on, ye reptiles and Injuns; you fight a man without a cross. I guess Lew Wetzel ain't to be trapped. He's too old a beaver for that. Good night, ye hide-and-seek knaves—go make petticoats for your squaws."

The Indians gave a ferocious war-whoop by way of answer to this challenge, and then the boat speeding onward, they returned slowly to the camp, one wounded by a stray ball, the rest with a calm assumption of dignity which was intended to deceive their wives, sisters, and daughters, as to the real extent of their mortification.

A cry of fury, such as even yet was new to Amy, followed.

The drunkards having apparently vanished during the fray, an indignant warrior went to the edge

of the camp to search for them. He moved slowly on to the tree where they had been, and yet he saw them not.

The point of land on which the tree stood formed one side of a little indentation of water, on the borders of which the Indians had camped. Exactly in a line with the point was a pile of snags, which had formed itself in the river, and round which the stream rushed with considerable force. Some of the trees on the pile were still green, and had but recently been brought down by the force of the waters. The Shawnee glanced carelessly at this, and then looked round for the fugitives. His foot kicked at the same time against a heavy, inert mass.

It was the body of the Alligator. The negro had disappeared, but the body bore all the usual signs of having been dealt with by their implacable enemy.

Terrible was now the confusion in the camp. The Indians yelled fearfully; some ran into the wood and called upon their enemies to appear, some skirted the river and tried to find a trail, and when after half-an-hour's search nothing was found, all came back, moody, silent, overcome by nameless terror, for they began to think there was some supernatural agency at work around them.

There were those who even said the negro had done it, and then fled. But he had not left a trace behind, and most of the warriors were too well aware of the reasons which insured his fidelity, to believe this possible for a moment. But who had done it? and where was the negro?

At last the whole party lay down to rest, and before an hour had passed, Amy and a sentry on the point were alone awake in camp.

Amy lay in the center of a group of Indian women, her ankle tied by a thong to that of the persevering old woman. She could not move away from where she was, but she could sit up, which she did at first under pretense of watching the child, and then from sheer inability to sleep. She gazed slowly around. There lay the warriors in heavy sleep, there lay the women at rest, and there, close at hand, the Indian girl and that child she had vowed to protect and save from the clutches of the merciless savages. About twenty feet distant stood the sentry. He was a young brave, who stood with his back to the water, leaning on his gun. He had walked up and down a little while, and had listened with rapt attention to the sounds of the night. But no sound came save those quite natural to the forest, and nature exerting her supremacy, he leaned his head on his gun, his eyes still fixed on the wood, but his whole being in a kind of semi-sleep.

Then Amy quivered in every limb as she saw a man rise as it were from the waters of the river, and creep with stealthy and cat-like footstep toward the shore. She knew that form, and she shuddered and closed her eyes, for she now understood those horrid signs which had so amazed the Indians and filled them with so much terror. But there was a fascination in the scene that made her open them again, and though she did close them once more, the unhappy maiden was as if under a spell—the spectator of a catastrophe against which she could not protest, because the actors were her friends.

Behind the first man came two others—one held the negro fast, and pressed a long, sharp knife against his back; the other, Custa-loga, who as usual periled even his life rather than do a deed of unnecessary bloodshed. Amy saw him, and her heart beat with tumultuous feelings, for she knew that all this promised succor and assistance; and yet she thought little of that at the moment, so fearful was the tragedy enacting.

The first man was on the sentry in a moment more, and then both sunk to the ground, and Amy closed her eyes and fainted. When

she recovered, all was still as before, save that no sentry walked on the point near the banks of the beautiful river.

The scene in the morning was frightful. The Indians beat themselves with knives, gnashed their teeth, tore their hair, and acted like wild beasts rather than men. Two runners scoured the forest, but nothing was found. The trail of the two men and their prisoner ended about half-a-mile below on the banks of the stream. As soon as this fact was proclaimed the camp was broken up, and a forced march of two hours brought them to the edge of the stream.

Amy now watched the proceedings of the Indians with considerable anxiety. They were at a point on the river where high banks commenced, and the shore was stony and barren. The horses, without being unloaded, were fastened one behind the other, the women and children were left on their backs, and then the oldest Indians went to the head, and drew the patient animals into the water. The stream ran with considerable rapidity over a pebbly ridge about two feet below its surface, on both sides of which the water was deep.

In this way they went about fifty feet into the stream, when one of the Indians halted and stood like a sign-post, round which the line of animals turned, led by the other red-skins, toward the same land they had already left. Amy's undivided attention was now given to discover the object of this strange maneuver. She had not advanced twenty yards up the stream in a diagonal direction, before a fissure in the rock opened to her view, concealed from the navigable parts of the river by a couple of tall pines.

It was the mouth of the great cave of the Ohio, since celebrated as the retreat of a certain river pirate, well known in local history.

In a few minutes more the whole party, animals and all, were within the shelter of the vast cavern, and the Indians on the shore, apparently satisfied, turned to go away.

It was a huge cave indeed, of very singular character, with several compartments, into one of which Amy retreated with the child. She was soon followed by the Indian girl, who proceeded to make the place as comfortable as possible under the circumstances; then the two young women sat down to talk over the events of the night, for the first time unwatched for many hours.

The effect produced upon the young Indian girl by the slaughter of her friends and the warriors of her tribe was painful. Amy could not but see that it produced a restraint, and even slight coldness, which she in vain endeavored to conceal and stifle. It was clear that she still sympathized with the young captive, and did not intend to abandon or betray her; but the blood of her kinsmen lay a dead weight upon her soul.

"Make haste—go," said she, in a musical, melancholy tone, the more sad that without the wind blew, and that the tempest roared, and gave sign of a gloomy night.

"I would gladly go—but why?"

"You make kill my friends—Custa bad, wicked—scalp—kill."

"No," exclaimed Amy, warmly; "Custa has not killed your friends. The man who appears to have vowed to slay and exterminate your race is one who has excuse indeed, for your friends killed his wife and his little one. My sister, had I been born a man, I would have done the same."

The Indian girl made no reply, but, somewhat mollified, leaned her head on her hand a moment, and then, wishing Amy a good night, sought refuge from her gloomy thoughts in sleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE VISITORS AND THE DEN.

ALL was hushed and still in the tavern of the Frog's Hole; the mistress of the house had retired to rest, the aged negress who wait-

ed during the day had disappeared within her cell, Kate was out in the forest, and Ralph Regin sat alone at a table, drinking and smoking, but uttering not one word.

It was late—the wind was hushed and low—an unnatural stillness pervaded all nature; there sat Ralph Regin, his eyes fixed on vacancy, a pipe between his teeth, and he only moved to reach the liquor, or fill his pipe, which he ever kept puffing at with all the vigor of a Dutchman or a pasha.

"'Tis plaguey cold to-night—hal ha!" he said, as he shivered in the pale moonlight; "and the whisky does seem weak to-night, awful weak! What a time the girl is; the moon's been up ever so long. It's my private opinion it's to-morrow. Well! if the bottle ain't empty! Let's have another, old fellow—plenty more where that come from; let us be jolly! Hurrah!"

The man rose tottering—he had drank one whole bottle, and walked across the room for another. There was no friendly hand—or, as some would say, no meddling wife—to keep the poisoned draught from his lips; he was master in his house—oh, yes! nobody would have doubted that who had seen him go half-stumbling, with hot face and winking eyes, to the little corner bar. He was lord and master, uncontrolled chief of the family—allowed no questions to be asked, permitted no remarks on his conduct, and walked erect, in theory, proud of his majesty.

After considerable coquetting with the counter and the bottle—after the same fashion as that of the celebrated individual who found his key-hole stolen one night—Ralph Regin regained his seat, sat himself cosily in his arm-chair, held up his hand, and turned the neck of the bottle toward his glass. He then took up the bumper, and seemed very much surprised to find the contents of his glass of a very watery nature, which was the less extraordinary, as, in his present sagacious mood, the jolly landlord had omitted to draw the cork.

"Well, I never—did," muttered Ralph. "Whisky—I say, whisky—mind you, whisky grows—I believe that it—grows weaker—every-day. The worst of it is, old boy, water don't grow any stronger. I should say the world's coming to an end!"

After this speech, which was directed to the bottle, Ralph remained musing for some time, his eyes fixed vacantly on the whisky, trying all the time, he declared, to explain to himself how it came about that the stuff was so weak, when he suddenly saw the bottle move, as by human agency, and fill to overflowing, with raw spirit, the glass which he had emptied.

"Hollo!" he exclaimed, "who is that?"

A chuckling laugh was the only reply vouchsafed to him.

Ralph Regin looked across the table, and in a chair, sitting in an easy posture, was a man. He was an odd kind of man, too. He wore a red, pointed cap, a red cloak, and had a pointed chin, and a pale face, and eyes like glow-worms in a gun-barrel, and saw-like teeth.

"Now, then, old fellow," said the stranger, in a husky, hoarse voice. "drink!"

"I've got no glass," replied Ralph, mechanically.

"What do you want with a glass, eh?" chuckled the man, knocking off the neck of the bottle, and swallowing the contents at a draught.

"Eh! you forget me," said Ralph, with all the eagerness of the sot.

"Plenty more where that came from," continued the other.

"Who is to pay?" asked Regin, with a glimmering of the landlord still about him.

"Never mind paying, let's be social. Now, then, Dinah, another bottle," said the stranger to the old negress, who had suddenly appeared on the scene.

"All right," repeated the other

with a drunken laugh, "it's all right! Who talks about paying?—it's prime," and he smacked his lips with infinite relish.

"You taste it now," said the newcomer, with a knowing wink.

"Ye—es," gasped Regin, with tears in his eyes, "it's rather hot—it burns me—I'm on fire!"

"Not a bit of it, quite a mistake—warms the heart, my boy," repeated the other.

"Well, it is rather strong," insisted Ralph; "but I'll take another—I'm awful thirsty."

The other laughed heartily, and poured him out a second tumbler, which did not seem quite so strong—in fact, it was quite delicious.

"It's prime," roared Ralph. "Prime! rich! glorious!—I say, old boy, sing us a song."

"Don't know any," replied the other, in a tone which seemed to prove that if he did, it was not desirable he should recollect one just then—the harmony of a man after his potatoes not being of the highest order of merit.

"Well, then make a noise; any thing to be sociable, eh?"

The man laughed again, and hammered on the table with his glass.

"By the way," suddenly said Ralph Regin, putting his left forefinger to the same side of his nose, "who are you?"

The man laughed still more heartily. Ralph Regin began to get into a passion. He spoke now in a tone of concentrated rage.

"If you don't answer, I'll—know why."

A strange noise startled him; he looked again. There was nobody in the chair, the tallow candle flickered on the table, the whisky bottle stood before him uncorked, and somebody was knocking stoutly at the door.

"Coming! coming!" he said, peering round the room, a little more sober than three hours before. "Can it have been a dream?—was it? Ha! ha! ha! it was the demon of the drink. He often comes now, that's what makes the whisky so weak. I've dreamed a good deal of him lately. Coming, coming!"

"Orr rite," said a husky voice without, "but the kevvicker yer comes the better."

"That voice," muttered Ralph Regin, laying down the candle again, and standing erect with alarm, "that voice! Am I dreaming still?"

"Now then!" cried the other, with the richest Cockney twang.

"Open," repeated an earnest, solemn voice; "we are travelers, weary and hungry, and seek rest."

"I guess it is rather late, strangers," replied Ralph Regin, assuming the strongest Connecticut nasality he could, as he unbolted the door.

"It is late," said the traveler, entering; "we lost our way in the woods, and your light led us here."

"Glad to give you a shake-down," replied Ralph, surveying the strange-looking serving-man with considerable uneasiness and doubt. "I reckon you mean catin'?"

"Rather," said the serving-man, putting down his master's saddle-bags, and then falling on a bench; "I'm wound up—my legs wouldn't take me not up Cornhill—no. Please, sir, excuse me," he continued, touching his cap.

"Rest, eat, and sleep," replied the other, gravely; "we start early."

"No ve von't; that's him," said Corney Ragg in the ear of Andrew Carstone, as Ralph Regin disappeared in search of the negress.

"Are you sure?" replied the retired merchant, trembling in every limb.

"If that arn't Hackett—eh," he added, rolling on his bench as the other returned, "ain't I tired—no I ain't, not at all. If you please, master landlord, you ain't got a bit of a hossler about, have ye?—coss there's two tidy bits of horse-flesh down them blessed steps!"

"Well, I reckon I'm hoss and hossler too," said Ralph at random; "so I'll put the hoofed critters right."

With these words he went outside the door and left the master and man alone.

"Ragg," said Andrew Carstone, laying his hand on the other's arm, "are you sure of what you say?"

"Bless you, sir, I know'd his voice," said Ragg, positively; "it's a little bit thicker like, and he do guess like them sailors we see'd down at Boston—but it's Hackett, as sure as your name is Carstone. Mum! Here comes one of them blacking-pots."

Andrew Carstone fell into the arm-chair in which Ralph Regin, as he called himself—or Hackett, as Corney Ragg supposed him to be—sat so many hours, and began turning over in his own mind the best way of arriving at the truth with regard to his lost child. His impatience knew no bounds. At first he determined upon at once challenging the owner of the Frog's Hole; then he thought of offering him pardon and reward to tell the truth—but he hesitated. He knew as yet nothing of that den, of the force of men whom the landlord might call around him—and curbing his eager heart, which beat as it had never beat before, he determined to act with prudence and caution.

It was too late.

Outside, Ralph Regin had listened and heard.

"Andrew Carstone and Corney Ragg! The game is up! Hackett! Hackett! If ever in the course of twenty years of crime and sins you stood in need of fertile brains, 'tis now. And the girl, where can she be? If they see her all is lost."

'Tis well she thinks herself older than she is. Can that villain Barton have taken her away?—the knave. He had better beware. That girl is a fortune to me—so long as she lives, I receive my pension. I will not part with her. And yet, my wealth is great. I could go where I am not known. I could live respected in Canada, in Virginia, and leave that wearisome woman behind. But I have married her—bah! She hates me and will not press that claim! But they seek vengeance. So ho, my masters, ye must find pretty Kate first, and she comes not to-night. The wild creature has, perhaps, camped at the hut. 'Tis certain—I see by the moon 'tis past midnight. She has quarreled with the squire—I fear I said too much about him—I began to fear her fancy would grow too serious for change. My hints about his evil reputation told perhaps too much. Nobody ever heard of the funeral of his wife! He forgot that. But, tut! let me think of my own dangers. Why did I quit the road? It would have been over before this, one way or the other. There, my hearties, eat your fill—you want it. They have ridden hard and fast. But ah! who has betrayed me? who has told? Is Sir Charles dead, and has the fool repented? Your gentleman is an odd rascal. If so, I had better confess, receive a kick or two, retire—the drink and care is getting too much for me—I really should feel wonderfully relieved—yes!" he added, looking fearfully around, "if I had not burned the Dutchman's house—never mind, 'tis done, and he was near dead, and I wanted another mother for Kate. And then I do cherish that girl—once I quite loved her—then she thought me her father. Drink, drink, drink, that ruined all. I told her the truth one day, that she was no child of mine or hers, and she has hated me ever since. Oh! 'tis a weary, weary life. But up, Hackett, once captain of the road; awake, and be a man. They wait."

And ceasing his disjointed talk, which had continued while he descended the steps, taking the horses to the sheds, and giving them food, he once more turned toward the house, turning over in his mind the wisest plan of escape from the consequences of his past crimes, which had served him so little for warning, that he had recently attempted to murder the peddler.

He rejected the only truly wise one, telling the truth; at all events until he should have found it impossible to do otherwise. Time, impunity, and drink, had hardened and deadened his heart. There was scarcely a corner left for any soft or kindly emotion.

He found Corney Ragg and Andrew Carstone eating and drinking like men who had traveled far, and he merely pointed out what was plentiful in the place, and then retired into a corner, where he sat down, and closing his eyes, appeared to doze, while the travelers were finishing their supper. The old negress all the while bustled about, growling between her teeth at the way in which she had been roused up to wait upon the new-comers.

About twenty minutes later, Andrew Carstone intimated that he had finished his meal, and asked where he could sleep.

"Well, I calculate I can find a bed or two," said Ralph Regin, rising; "the Frog's Hole is gin'rally considered first-rate."

"Show me a bedroom, then," replied the merchant, as carelessly as he could.

"This way," continued Ralph, rising sleepily and rubbing his eyes.

"Orr rite," said Ragg, who really was very tired and inclined for rest.

"I guess you'll want a room tu?" asked the landlord in an off-hand way.

"I'm not partikler, never was; so as I sleep, it's orr rite—anyver 'ell do," and Cornelius Ragg, who had spared neither beer nor whisky, prepared to follow.

Ralph Regin took up two tallow candles and led the way. He ascended the steps already alluded to, but instead of turning to the right toward the room formerly occupied by the peddler, he pushed open a door facing the stairs, which revealed a passage of some length, out of which several other passages branched.

"Why, this is a large place of yours," said Andrew, secretly much surprised; "you can sleep a regiment."

"We gin'rally do sleep a few," replied Ralph Regin, in a humble and obsequious tone. "This is a good room. There ain't no curtains, but that are a bed as is comfortable, stranger."

"Thank you," said Carstone, as he entered the room.

It was a small, square place without any window, receiving air and light in the day from a kind of fissure in the roof. On all sides the walls were of logs, with mud to fill up the interstices, but a glance at the roof showed at once that it was a compartment in a cavern. The bed was a kind of shelf raised on logs, with straw and horse-cloths. On these Carstone at once cast himself, and wearied, exhausted as he was, after a fervent prayer for the success of his mission, fell fast asleep.

Corney Ragg followed Ralph a little further down the passages until he came to a door leading into a similar place, which he entered without a sign of suspicion or doubt, took his candle, wished the other good-night, yawned, and threw himself on the bed. The instant, however, the door was closed behind him, he, without the slightest noise, raised himself on his elbow and listened. He distinctly heard a heavy bar lowered, a bar which he had remarked as he entered, and which entirely prevented all exit.

"Nabbed, by gum," said Corney Ragg, in a low tone. "I thought as how he knowed me. Ah, Muster Hackett, you're very deep, you are; but here's von as is deeper. Orr rite."

He listened again, and distinctly heard the retreating footsteps of Ralph, and then the closing of the bar against his master's door.

Ragg grinned and got up. He examined the door. It was a great, heavy door of planks and bars, hung on huge old hinges, fastened very strongly, while a couple of big wooden bolts promised privacy

and retirement to the traveler if he chose to take it. Corney Ragg was one of those men who never threw a chance away. He made sure of the bolts, and then proceeded to draw several articles from his voluminous pockets, and from the saddle-bags, which he had taken care to convey to his room. First there came a pair of pistols of rather startling size, a lantern, a whole parcel of tools, a small saw, a chisel, and a number of skeleton keys, not omitting a small crowbar. When Mr. Carstone objected to these questionable articles, the rag-dealer had urged such a host of arguments in their favor, from his knowledge of the character of Captain Hackett, that the ex-merchant yielded, and allowed the other to act according to his own experience, which, in house-breaking and such little secret matters, was far beyond anything the magistrate was aware of.

"Now, then, for a quiet nap," said Corney to himself. "It's orr rite—let him go to sleep—and then, my! von't I startle his two eyes!"

Having thus arranged his plans, Cornelius retired to his couch, fully convinced in his own mind that he was a hero, and certainly with an easier conscience than ever he had enjoyed on any former occasion when he had brought forth his somewhat suspicious professional implements.

Corney Ragg was far too old a warrior to oversleep himself on such an occasion. He subsequently declared that he did not stay more than two hours on his bed, and yet that when he jumped up, there was a flickering light from some place on the roof. He had taken the precaution to light his oil-lamp in the lantern, so that he now again lit the candle, and proceeded to business.

After a careful examination of the door, he came to the conclusion that to saw a square hole, large enough to put his hand through, was the best plan of operation; and being a man of few words and ready wit, he at once began to put his plan into execution. An auger soon enabled him to make a hole, through which his long thin saw could penetrate; and then, having well greased that useful instrument, he began to work steadily, and yet with extreme caution. Every minute or so he listened attentively, and finding that no alarm was given, proceeded with his task.

One side of the plank, which was crossways from side to side of the door, had been completely sawn through, and the second was just about to give way and allow the wood to fall in, when Ragg distinctly heard a noise. He quietly withdrew his saw, blew out the candle, closed the dark-lantern, and put his ear to the place where he had been at work. It was a sound of heavy but cautious steps which came down the passage, and soon reaching his own door, halted. Then the bar was cautiously removed, fortunately, it appeared, without any sawdust being noticed, and the door pushed. The bolts held firm.

"He's bolted it," muttered Ralph Regin, between his set teeth, while Corney Ragg clatched a pistol as he felt the bar replaced.

"At yer old work, Master Hackett," said Corney Ragg, shaking his head.

He listened again. The landlord was going away, but quite in an opposite direction from that by which he came. Cornelius Ragg waited a moment, then wrenched off the piece of wood, put his hand through, raised the bar, slid the bolts, and with his two pistols in his belt, his lantern in one hand, and the crowbar slung on his right wrist, he darted out into the passage just in time to catch a glimpse of Ralph Regin disappearing up a flight of steps about thirty feet ahead.

Corney Ragg, determined to penetrate the mysteries of the place, followed without hesitation. He had lost sight of the ruffian-proprietor of the Frog's Hole, who

seemed to have improved the natural advantages of the locality to a degree that would have been surprising, had not his long residence there in part explained it.

But of this Corney Ragg did not think. All he cared for was to find out what the ex-highwayman was really about.

He trod cautiously along the passage, until he came to a flight of steps, or rather a ladder of wood, against the side of the rock, and which apparently led to another fissure about ten feet above. Corney Ragg began to ascend the creaking stairs with extreme caution, and found himself, in a few moments, at the mouth of a kind of cavern, through which there was a strong draught. Corney did not hesitate a moment, but pushed on, and soon caught sight of a glimmering light a little ahead. He now trod with all the cat-like caution of a house-breaker, and in a moment more found himself by the open door of a room, once a part of the cave, but divided off by a strong partition. Beside this door was a ladder which led perpendicularly up the side of the rock.

All this Cornelius Ragg took in at a glance, but he quickly turned to the door itself, and started to find himself close to Ralph Regin. His back was turned toward him, and he stooped toward the floor, over a hole. Then Cornelius Ragg saw him draw a small bag from his pocket, which, from the sound, he knew to be money, and throw it down upon other money, after which he dropped a stone over the hole and began to rise.

Corney Ragg gave him no time to catch him, but turned back, and reached his room as rapidly as possible, quite satisfied with the discovery he had made.

He slept soundly until next morning, without further disturbance, and rose late. He was about to leave his room and set his master free, when he heard voices, and crept out cautiously to listen. He distinctly saw the person of a sentry with his back turned to the door of the room in which his master was confined. He also distinctly caught the sound of many men talking.

It was quite evident that Regin had received a considerable accession of strength in the night.

Ragg quietly gathered up his tools, slipped out of his door, shut it behind him, and, turning to the right, began following the path which the master of the house had shown him the night before. As he expected, at the top of the last ladder there was an opening. It was in the center of a thicket.

Corney Ragg did not stop to examine the view. He saw a track before him, leading eastward, and he determined to avail himself of his liberty to place as long a distance between himself and Hackett as possible, quite satisfied that he was thus best serving the interest of his master.

To have attempted to rescue him under the circumstances, would have been to have run too great a risk.

When Ralph Regin found in the morning that Cornelius Ragg had made use of his old schooling as a housebreaker to escape from the Frog's Hole, his fury knew no bounds. At early dawn a party of Indians and white men, headed by Simon Girty, had arrived at the Hole on a secret expedition, in which Regin was concerned, and for which the use of his house was required. This had made him, for a short time, neglect attending to his own private affairs, especially as the arrival of this band to a certain extent served his purpose.

It was some consolation to know that Andrew Carstone was safe. He little feared the law, which could scarcely reach the outlaw in his den, while it would have been equally hopeless to have contended against two men like the merchant and Ragg, had they remained free in their movements.

What dark thoughts passed through his mind—what gloomy ideas, the necessary consequences

of former crimes, came to him in the morning—it would be hard to say. In detaining Andrew Carstone, he had no fixed object in view; he knew not how he was to get rid of him. Like many other criminals, he kept him a prisoner and trusted to the chapter of accidents.

And Kate came not back.

This was another source of uneasiness. He had, however, little time to think, as one who had much influence over him, and whom he rather feared, required his services. He was to aid in another crime—of a much lighter nature, it is true, but when once begun, who shall say where the career of vice and guilt will stop?

Toward evening, the Frog's Hole was again silent. It was tenanted only by Ralph, his wife, the negress, and two renegade white men. The rest had started up the country in the hope of rescuing Amy Moss from the Indians. Two parties were thus seeking to aid her escape, though from very different motives.

CHAPTER XXII.

A RIFT IN THE MYSTERY CLOUD.

WHEN Kate remained behind, after her interview with Squire Barton, she proceeded slowly on her way for some time, and then, as if struck with a new idea, determined to pass the night in the hut, and, on the morrow, commence an expedition she contemplated. Her mind relieved from the weight of what she felt was an evil dream, thinking calmly and seriously, she began to see the character of Squire Barton every moment in more hideous colors, and, consequently, to have awakened within her strong sentiments of sympathy for Amy Moss.

She began, too, to look back with regret to the past life she had spent with Ralph Regin and Martha, who, she well knew, were not her parents. Then, who were? Whence came she? Should she ever be able to trace those who had abandoned her, or from whom she had been forcibly taken? These were questions which came rushing with tumultuous force to her mind.

How should she begin the journey she contemplated?

In the first place, she thought that if she could but carry some useful intelligence to the Moss, she would at once raise up to herself friends in the judge and his family. No longer jealous, or fearful of the beauty of Amy Moss, Kate determined to free her from the trammels of the squire. She knew, from some dark hints of Ralph Regin in his savage moods, that there were secrets which would utterly blast the hopes of that individual, secrets which Ralph had only recently learned, but which he promised to make good use of when the proper time should come. From a conversation which passed between the man calling himself her father, and Martha, it appeared that he only began to unravel certain ideas in his mind, and was biding his time to obtain full knowledge, and then to use them with effect.

The night passed away, and Kate had scarcely slept when the bright dawn came, and she was up, and after a meal made from the dried venison in a small wallet, sallied out into the forest, in the direction of Scowl Hall.

The morning was bright and beautiful, the sun was warm and genial, the birds sang their tuneful notes, full chorus, in the trees, as Kate, a little pale, but beautiful as usual, entered below the arches of the green forest. The path was along a slight rise, trending away toward the Moss, in the direction of which she moved for some time, intending to cross the Scioto at a ford, with which she was familiar. The young girl, though with such little prospect of fears from either white man or Indian, still used many of those precautions which are induced by a border education. Her principal desire was to avoid being taken back to the Frog's

Hole, a consummation to be thwarted at any risk.

Presently she came to a small valley, inclosed by tiny hills—a circular slope of brush and trees, on one side thickly wooded, on the other, which was very steep, partly covered by grass; and in other places rocky, steep and barren, except at the summit, which was fringed with bushes. Kate was quietly descending one side of this, when her eyes caught sight of two human figures, moving cautiously along the edge of the ridge.

She slipped hastily behind a tree, but it was too late; the two men imitated her example, at the same time leveling their rifles. As they did so, Kate was able to see that they were white men.

She at once stepped forward from her place of concealment and presented herself openly to view. At sight of her the two white men came bounding wildly down the steep side of the glen, waving their rifles, and never pausing until they were close to her, when they slackened their pace and looked with disappointment at one another.

"How came you alone in the woods, young girl?" said the foremost of the two men, a handsome youth.

"I am going to the ford," replied the girl, quietly, at the same time surveying her questioner with curiosity.

"Know you not," continued the other, while his companion, a scout and hunter, surveyed her curiously, "that the Indians are out, and that it is dangerous to be here? The red-skins are killing and slaying all they find."

"Strangers," said Kate, in a sad voice, "unfortunately I have nothing to fear from the Indians."

"I know'd it," exclaimed the other, the one who as yet had not spoken; "you're the gal of that catercornered old white Indian, Ralph Regin, the friend of the meanest man in creation, Simon Girty."

"I was called his daughter," replied Kate, proudly; "but I am no child of his. I have left his house forever."

"You are she they call Kate Regin," said the young man, curiously; "you know, then, of Amy, Miss Amy Moss, of the Block?"

"You are—?" asked Kate, eagerly.

"Her brother Charles," said the young man, anxiously.

"I thought so," exclaimed Kate, with a crimson blush at her own words.

"Why?"

"I do not know why, but I thought so. She is safe. The Indians have taken her up to the great cave on the Ohio; no harm is intended her, and I believe money would buy her; but I do not know—I am trying to find out. Don't ask me any questions—but I have something to discover, and I mean to do it."

"You amaze me," said Charles Moss; "your present journey has something to do with my sister."

"Every thing," replied Kate, gravely; "but I am not sure of any thing. All I know is that she is more the prisoner of white men than of Indians."

"Of white men!" exclaimed Charles, passing his hand over his brow.

"Them rinigades is wuss than aborigines," said William Harrod; "I shouldn't wonder if they had made some plot to rob the judge, just by way of a ransom."

"That's not it," insisted Kate, positively. "But, Charles Moss, return home. In a day or two, at most, I will bring you tidings of the truth. In the mean time, do you return to the Moss, arm a party of men, and go up to the great cave."

"On the Ohio?" repeated Harrod.

"Yes."

"But Custaloga?" asked Charles, anxiously.

"Is hanging about the Indian trail, I have heard," said Kate.

"And Harvey—Dick Harvey?" asked the young man, musing.

"Of him I can say nothing more than that he is a prisoner," replied Kate, evasively.

"A prisoner!" cried the two.

"So I heard," said Kate; "there was talk of taking him up to Chillicothe."

"And my brother, Walter Harrod?" continued William, hurriedly.

"Your brother!" exclaimed Kate. "Are you the brother of him whose wife the Indians killed?"

"I am, gal," said the hunter, striking the ground with the stock of his gun—"I am; and the Indians had best keep out of my sight."

"Let us return," put in Charles; "your advice, Miss—"

"Kate," said she, blushing, as she saw him hesitate.

"Your advice, Miss Kate, shall be followed. We go to the ford also, and will keep you company. Let us lose no time; my blood boils to know the end of all this. Amy a prisoner, Harvey up at Chillicothe, and Custa in the wood—there is no time, not an instant, to be lost."

Saying these words, Charles shouldered his rifle, and began once more to ascend the ridge, making a short cut to rejoin the trail, which followed the skirt of the wood on the otherside. They had to cross a small cane-brake and swamp, after which they again were to follow the path under the forest trees for some distance. They had got half-way through the swamp, when suddenly they all started and looked at one another with surprise and alarm. Loud bursts of laughter, cries of distress, and shouts and yells of a very fearful description, broke suddenly upon their ears, proceeding from the wood before them. The shouts were Indian, the cries were apparently those of white men.

"What's that?" said Charles, clutching his rifle.

"Injines torturing a white man," replied Harrod, dashing ahead at once.

"Hist!" said Kate; "be cautious—the Indians are not many, and you may surprise them. Follow me."

Stooping low in the tall grass, and exhibiting a knowledge of the locality which in a woman was surprising, Kate, who never went out without her light gun, led them with extreme rapidity to the skirt of the forest, and then along the trees behind some bushes, until they were close to the scene of action, which was another small valley, one of the numerous dells that intersected those vast forests.

Then they halted and peered down through the bushes at the persons who were the actors in this tumultuous scene.

They were at the head of a small opening, the two slopes of which lay right and left of them. It was a stony, briery place, without any pleasing vegetation, though the summits of the lofty trees around cast a deep shadow over the depths below. In the center of the locality, about forty yards distant, were six Indians in their war-paint, dancing round a white man, whom they jostled, tossed, cast backward to and fro, with loud shouts of laughter, which were answered by execrations from the unfortunate victim of their savage merriment—an individual whom none of the party recognized.

It was a man in rather a showy livery, red, and ornamented with gold, who made desperate efforts to release himself from his captors.

"Bojour, brudder—white man dance—roast presently—fine chief—grand—big officer."

"Roast! yer sneaking, naked crossing-sweepers," exclaimed the white man; "laugh away—yer vill be tired by and by. I won't dance—I can't—I'm tired."

"Dance," said a tall Indian, hitting him gently with the handle of his hatchet.

"Now, then," cried the white man, "none of yer larks—it hurts. Vy, vat are you, with your painted mugs? Yer ugly enough to be Old Scratch; but there are too many of you—bowl away."

"That poor man thinks it's all fun," said Charles, in a low, hushed tone.

"He's a green Britisher," replied Harrod, coldly.

"And are we not English—white men—Christians?" asked young Moss, rather indignantly. "Was not your own grandfather an Englishman, and was not Clara's father an Englishman? Let us save him."

"You're right, sir," said Harrod, with a blush; "here goes."

Next minute three sheets of flame, three cracks of rifles, startled the wild group of savages. But the prisoner was the most astonished. He now first began to comprehend, it appeared, the extent of his danger. Gazing wildly around, he snatched from under his coat a small iron bar, with which he began laying about him in so vigorous and startling a manner, that the Indians, thus assaulted, and the chief part of them severely wounded, darted beneath the trees and disappeared.

"Run for your life—this way!" roared Charles, showing himself for a moment.

"Orr rite," replied the other, bounding up the valley with frantic speed, as two or three shots from behind quickened his perception of danger.

In another minute Cornelius Ragg was under the cover of the bushes.

"Vell, yer don't mean for to say," he exclaimed, as he regained his breath, "that them ugly sweeps meant nuffin more than fun?"

"They would have roasted you before night," said Charles, drily; "but keep down—your red coat is a good mark."

"Vell," continued Corney Ragg, bobbing down; "this here do look like earnest too. Vell, I never—much obliged to you gents—glad to make your acquaintance."

A rapid interchange of shots now followed, which, however, after lasting a few minutes, ceased, as the Indians gave way, evidently crippled by the first discharge, and made off into the forest. The whole party then rapidly rejoined the trail.

"Where are you going?" said Charles, curiously.

"Vell, I ain't partikler! I've just escaped from a place they call the Frog's Hole—they've got my master locked up—a set of land pirates, sir."

"Who and what are you?" replied Charles, somewhat surprised, while Kate and Harrod listened attentively.

Ragg, without explaining the secret object of his journey, narrated all that had occurred up at the house of Ralph Regin. Charles looked inquiringly at Kate.

"It's true, I have no doubt of it," replied Kate, quietly; "Ralph Regin is capable of murder. Ask Ezram Cook."

"Ah! he did say something before he left. This is worse than the Indians!" exclaimed the young man. "Stranger, you had better come to my father's house, make a declaration to him—he is a judge—and we'll take a run up to the Hole as soon as we have attended to some more pressing business."

"Orr rite," said Ragg, nodding his head; "he's a judge hisself, is my master."

"Rely on it, your master shall be saved, and the villain punished."

"Vell—I hope he vill—though if 'ud answer a question or two, may be ye wouldn't say no more," observed Cornelius Ragg, philosophically.

"Charles Moss," said Kate, pausing, "here we part. Your path is to the right, mine to the left. Fear not for me. I am safe anywhere. Rely upon it that, in a few days, I shall have news of importance for you."

"I thank you beforehand—most welcome will you be at the Moss. Your hand, Miss," said Charles, respectfully.

"I shake hands freely," replied Kate; and then, nodding in a friendly way to the whole party, she entered the forest and disappeared.

The three men walked on a little way without speaking. Then suddenly Charles Moss broke the previous stillness and addressed Harrod.

"She seems a fine, open-hearted girl—'tis a pity she should have been brought up by Ralph Regin," he observed, thoughtfully.

"Vot!" said Ragg, clutching his arm violently—"that ere gal is Ralph Regin's gal?"

"Yes," replied Charles, much surprised; "but why this surprise and emotion?"

"Coe she's vot ve're cum from England for," said Ragg, striking his head; "she's my master's dorte."

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Charles Moss, turning round and looking hard at the cockney.

"No, I am n't," said Ragg; "you just listen to me, that's all."

And rapidly, in his wild, disjointed way, he told his story, to which the two listened with great interest, particularly Charles, whose eyes flashed with great animation.

"Well," exclaimed the young man, "be under no uneasiness. I will take this matter in hand. In a very short time Kate will be at the Moss. That Ralph Regin is a terrible scoundrel, but he shall pay for this."

"Orr rite," said Cornelius Ragg, who was excited to a pitch of great enthusiasm. "Ah, Master Hackett, you'll pay your debts arter all."

"Who's Hackett?" inquired Charles.

"Vy, Hackett, *alias* Regin, *alias* Robbs; he's as many names as a cat has lives, he has—he vos vot ve calls a highwayman."

"A pretty fellow to bring up an only child of loving parents," said Charles; "but yonder is the Moss. Let us hasten. This scouting business has made them anxious. See, they sign to us from the Block."

Cornelius Ragg gazed at the stockade, the Block-house, and the whole building, with feelings of great interest. It was quite a novel sight to him, as indeed was every thing he met with in America, especially the Indians, who at first had more amused than alarmed him.

The return of the scouting-party was hailed with considerable pleasure. The young man joined his father and sister, while Ragg was taken charge of by Harrod, who undertook to initiate him into the mysteries of the forest residence.

"Well, my son, what news?" said the judge, hastily.

"Amy is safe, though a prisoner; Custa is with Walter, on his track; but Harvey, I am sorry to say—"

"What of Harvey?" exclaimed Jane, turning very pale, and clutching her brother's arm convulsively.

"He is a prisoner!" exclaimed Charles, turning round and looking curiously at her.

"Poor fellow!" said Jane, bending her eyes on the ground, and seeking to conceal, by attending to some detail of the table, the acute suffering she experienced and the tears that she could not restrain. Charles took no notice openly of this demonstration of feeling, though he thought of it afterward often, but turning to his father, informed him of the intended expedition to the cave on the Ohio.

"Heaven bless you, my son!" said the judge, who was pale and careworn from anxiety, during these few days. "But how learnt you this news?"

"That, my dear father, is a fresh story," exclaimed Charles; and in a few words he explained all that had happened in relation to Kate, a story which, with that of Ragg, interested both until the hour of the afternoon siesta, when the judge lay down, or rather retired for the purpose, while Charles did so in reality, after selecting the men who were to accompany him on his expedition.

Meanwhile Kate hurried along toward the ford, her ideas somewhat divided between the thought

of Amy Moss, Barton, and the young hunter whose acquaintance she had so suddenly made. She could not help being struck with the manner and mien of the handsome young man, whose tone of voice, whose look, were so gentle in comparison with the men she had been accustomed to. But as she advanced, the thought of her self-imposed task struck her, and she determined, in accordance with her plan of operation, to devote her whole energies to this one idea—this one thought.

There was an idea in her head, which for some time had been gaining ground, hinted at by Regin, muttered by Simon Girty in moments of anger, which she conceived it possible to unravel only by exploring the mysteries of Scowl Hall, a place which Kate had long been anxious to see.

Kate stood on the summit of a green hill. Here she first caught sight of the ford, and looking downward along the trail, she could hear nothing save the rushing of the river's waters over a pebbly bottom, and the occasional note of a bird, or perhaps that secret hum of life which perpetually arises over the waving tree-tops.

Satisfied, then, that she would be able to cross the ford unseen by any of the emissaries of Barton, and quite sure, from the beaten path before her, that she was in the right track, she tripped quickly down the hillside, and stood upon the water's edge. Warily again she looked around; then stooping, loosened her moccasins, and tucked up her dress. With one hand she held her gun and moccasins, with the other her dress, and then springing from stone to stone, sometimes leaping, sometimes wading, she was soon on the other bank.

"What does perty Kate Regin doon in these parts?" said a well-known voice, that made the heart of the young girl bound within her.

"Simon Girty!" she exclaimed, with a start, as that worthy appeared from among the trees.

"Well, I guess it are Simon Girty—he ginrly is known about a bit."

"I believe he is known," said Kate, coldly, as she continued to fasten her moccasins, "and better known than liked."

"Well, that may be true, *tu*—I ain't much of a favorite, I know—but I don't want to be. How's Regin?"

"I don't know," replied Kate, moving up the bank.

"Why, how skittish you ayre; but you ain't told me wur you're going."

"I am going to Scowl Hall, to see Squire James Barton," said Kate, looking hard at him.

"Well, I reckon he ain't at hum—but you can wait, I dar' say. Well, good mornin': I'm off t'other way. Hope you will be less ryled next time I see you, Miss."

And the ruffian, somewhat puzzled at what Kate could possibly want in that direction, turned his back on her, as if thoroughly disgusted with her short and angry manner.

Kate, who knew the man well, had affected with him a confidence she little felt, and was therefore much relieved when they parted company. It is true that she had never penetrated any further than the point she had now reached, and would have been all the better for a guide; still, the track was tolerably clear, and she knew that Scowl Hall was not situated at any very great distance from the ford.

She rejoiced, moreover, at the news that Barton was absent.

This gave her, she imagined, the opportunity of making the search she desired—a search which, if successful, promised to be of great value to persons in whom she already took an interest. Kate had lived so long amid the bad and the reckless that she felt a kind of relief in the prospect of associating herself in any way with the good and the pure.

Not that Kate had been tainted in any material way by the com-

panionship of Ralph Regin and his ruffian followers. She had found in books a constant refuge against the cursing and swearing and other evil habits which were so common in the Frog's Hole; and when the visitors became violent, would shut herself in her room, and there take shelter against painful associations.

Martha, despite her weakness in having become the wife of one who had been the cause of her first husband's death, was not wholly depraved. She was weak to the degree that leads to crime, but she sought by every means in her power to protect the young girl she had charge of from contamination.

What Kate had learned was a kind of masculine character, which in her position in the woods was of considerable use to her, and without which she would never have undertaken the present journey to Scowl Hall.

In a few minutes the usual signs of the approach to a plantation were seen. Fields of corn, open meadows, a few huts, were visible. Still, on the side toward the river the wood was thick, and Kate kept on the verge of it, in sight of the trail; for she had no wish to be seen by any of the overseers, white laborers, or negroes of the plantation.

She saw several working in the fields, but they were too busy to notice her.

Presently the sound of the watch-dogs' barking came upon her ears, and she moved more cautiously and slowly. She was in quite a thick and tangled wood.

Suddenly she started. Voices were heard near her, and one voice she knew too well, that of him she believed absent.

A moment she hesitated, and then, remembering the object of her coming, she crept forward, and in another moment saw James Barton seated on a bench, smoking, while Phoebe poured out his coffee for him. Phoebe was a mulatto, only half a negress, and not ill-looking, as we have already said. Kate felt a burning sense of shame and disgust as she recollected that even in her ignorance and weakness she could have loved that man.

Conquering all other sentiments in one of earnest desire to fathom the mystery of that man's life, she glided a step or two forward and listened.

"Phoebe," said Barton, "no more whimpering and grumbling, or I'll sell you away South—you are getting foolish."

"Say no more," replied Phoebe, with a flash of suppressed anger in her eye.

"Listen: I have arranged with Girty and Regin and others, to snatch Amy from that traitor, Tecumseh. She will be here before the week is out."

"As your wife, I 'spose," said Phoebe, with another flash of the eye.

"As my wife—and hearken, Phoebe; I wish her to be my lawful wife," repeated Barton, who was very pale.

"How you manage dat, eh?" asked Phoebe, quickly.

"I repeat, she must be my legal wife," said Barton, fiercely.

"Massa Barton," cried Phoebe, "I know you wicked, cruel man; but you no murder her."

"I don't want to murder her," continued Barton, suddenly; "who talked of murdering?"

"How else you marry Amy legal?" said Phoebe.

"Well, I do not know," added Barton; "I haven't the least idea; but, I know this—if my marriage with Amy Moss is not a legal marriage, free from all detraction, I will dog you within an inch of your life, and hunt you out of Ohio with blood-hounds."

"Flog me!" screamed the woman, wildly. "Wat for?"

"Yes, *Miss* Phoebe; you ain't too pretty to be flogged now."

The woman bowed her head, annihilated at the cool villany of the man who had been her master for so many years, and whom she had

served at the peril of her own soul.

"You understand me now, I hope," said Barton.

"No," said the slave, raising her head, and confronting the monster with a courage quite superhuman in one who had so long bowed the neck to the most abject of servitudes.

"What do you mean?" roared Barton, snatching up his heavy riding-whip.

The mulatto stood still, crossed her arms, and waited for the blow. She had never received one before.

"Take that!" shrieked the infuriated ruffian.

"Coward! move and you die!" said a well-known voice, while a rifle-barrel came into dangerous proximity with his breast. He stood transfixed with surprise and terror, his uplifted whip in his hand.

"Kate!" he cried, really alarmed at the menacing position of the gun-barrel.

"And James Barton would strike a woman," said Kate, with a bitter sneer.

"Pshaw! a mulatto—she offended me! Ah!" he cried, as a sudden thought flashed across his mind, "what want you here? You have been listening!"

Said I not, the hour of vengeance would come?" said Kate, coldly, still holding her gun pointed toward him. "I have heard all! But I shall reveal nothing—on one condition."

"That condition?" asked Barton, who now folded his arms with an assumption of coolness, quite contrary, however, to his real sentiments.

"That you resign Amy Moss, and reinstate her in her rights," said Kate, quietly.

"Never!" replied Barton. "What business is this of yours? what know you of Amy Moss; and whom do you mean by her?"

"I would not have Amy Moss espouse a villain," began Kate.

"Tush, girl; this is folly—one whistle and you are overpowered. Lift up your gun and let us talk calmly."

"James Barton, think not I will trust your word," said Kate, putting her finger on the trigger and moving back; "I have your secret."

"It will cost you your life," roared Barton with a fearful laugh.

At that instant, the bold girl's gun was dashed up in the air, going off from the blow, and her arms were pinioned by Phoebe.

She turned and saw the mulatto, who held down her eyes, ashamed of her treachery. But with reflection, dread of her master had returned, and she had purchased her own forgiveness by an act of ingratitude to one whose generous intervention in her favor was likely to cost her so dear.

"Ah! ah! my fine young lady," said Barton, fiercely, as he caught her wrists, "your mad curiosity has cost you your life. How could you think that I would let you depart with my secret?"

At the same moment, he dragged her hurriedly along toward the house.

Kate spoke not a word from the moment she felt herself overcome. She was so astonished at the act of Phoebe, whom she had saved from a lashing, that she could not speak. She was planning in her own mind how to escape from a fate which she knew must be serious, as the secret she had now discovered was one she knew Barton would not forgive.

She walked, then, between that wretched man and that unfortunate woman, with a calm, proud step, that showed no fear. They took her to the front of the house and led her in.

A few minutes more and Phoebe came out, looking about wildly and very pale, and then a long, piercing shriek was heard through the house, a shriek that awoke the echoes with its horror.

Then all was still.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FOUR FRIENDS.

WHEN Richard Harvey saw the party which had possession of Amy go their way, the last sign of anxiety and nervousness departed from his countenance. The Eccentric Artist prepared to die like a hero of the woods, without giving to the Indians any of that satisfaction they are known to experience when an enemy dies without nerve or courage, and exhausted nature yields to the torture.

There were no less than a hundred and fifty warriors and boys assembled now, and looking impatiently to the moment when the torture should begin. In the middle of the camp was a small, clear, open space, where probably many a deed of blood had been done, and here they took Dick Harvey and set him in their midst. Then the whole knavish and cowardly crew commenced chanting, dancing, yelling round him, stopping every now and then to kick and beat him.

Folding his arms, Dick stood stoically resigned to whatever fate they chose to impose on him.

He saw, with a burning face and the mien of an indignant martyr, however, that they were about to make him run the gauntlet, for the Indians were ranging themselves in a long double line about two yards apart, and were arming themselves with stout hickory sticks. At the end of this long human line of men without mercy, and boys more cruel still, Harvey was placed, and then a shower of blows from one of the nearest, gave the signal for him to run. His teeth set, his head bowed, his thoughts more full of anguish than at some more cruel but less ignominious death, he started away wildly, evading the blows with considerable dexterity.

Suddenly his eye caught sight of one who stood a little ahead of him, and who, instead of a hickory, had in his hand a small, shining ax, with which he intended probably only to maim—his death was too rich a luxury to be wasted; and he determined to balk this dusky ruffian at all events.

The line through which he had to run was right across the camp, from one side to the other. To his right was the entrance by which Custa had escaped on the occasion of his visit to the camp. To his left was the council-house, a large and prominent building, which, could he but once reach it, he knew enough of Indian customs to be aware that he would not be called on to recommence his odious task. There was no time for indecision, and his mind was made up with rapidity and vigor.

He suddenly turned to the left, hurled an Indian to the ground, and then away he darted toward the council-house, the post in front of which was now the coveted object of his desires. A shower of hickory sticks was sent after him to stay his progress if possible; but, he was not to be checked by trifles. The Indians were behind him, yelling—screeching, as he would have said—like “infernal furies.”

The wished-for post was not far distant, and Dick Harvey began to hope for a successful issue to this part of his trial, when, suddenly, right before him stood an Indian, who had just entered the camp, and who, casting off his blanket, grappled with the unfortunate prisoner, and he, being out of breath and fatigued, was easily sent to the ground. The whole ferocious gang of pursuers were upon him in an instant, and one and all began to kick and beat him, laughing all the while at the failure of his attempt. They then tore his clothes to ribbons, and left him on the ground unconscious and faint. Presently, however, a woman—for all the women had not departed—brought him some water and a little bread. And there he lay near the council-house, all but dead.

About an hour later, the savage and unscrupulous wretches took him into the council-hall, after

washing his bruises with rum and giving him a good draught to produce a factitious strength. There he stood glaring at his persecutors with looks which told of undaunted and unchanged courage, and also of undying hate. Dick Harvey, the Eccentric Artist, who hitherto had looked upon Indians rather with an eye to the picturesque than any thing else, began to feel something of that fierce and burning hostility toward them which belongs to nearly all those educated on the borders, and who had an opportunity of experiencing their tender mercy.

A warrior rose, and the rest became silent, for to them one of the rich parts of such entertainments was the opportunity it offered of boasting and taunting. It was a savage-looking fellow who began, and Dick Harvey well knew that the purport of his speech was death—death without hesitation and without mercy. The man showed certain scars which had been inflicted on him in battle with the whites, and as he spoke of these the expression of his countenance was perfectly diabolical. Holding in his hand a knife and a piece of wood, he spoke with animation and fierceness, and though Dick Harvey was not able to comprehend the words used, he knew very well their purport. The whole party applauded with frenzied delight. The speaker finally sat down, and the old chief made a notch on the piece of wood.

Two other speakers followed, who appeared to speak on the same side, and two notches were marked for them. Then an old man, covered with scars and medals, rose and pointed to the white man, spreading his hand gently over him. His voice was musical and persuasive, and it was evident that he spoke on the side of mercy, as the victim might have guessed by the murmurs which arose on all sides. Instead of grunts of approval, he met with grunts of disapproval.

Then the speaking ceased, and a war-club was handed to the warrior nearest the door, and this man struck the weapon violently on the ground. And all those who struck the ground were recorded as votes for death, while those who declined to strike the ground were taken no note of. They were the votes for mercy.

The old chief stood up in the midst. He counted the notches. He then summed up the number of the marks he had made, counted those present, and decided accordingly. The majority for death was very great.

A question now appeared to arise as to how his death should be compassed, and all those outside the wigwam made the “welkin ring with shouts of joy.”

At this moment a messenger or scout entered the village, and made a secret communication to the young chief, Tecumseh.

The prisoner was forgotten in the excitement which followed the news thus brought. The warriors flew to arms, and the execution of Dick Harvey was adjourned. It had been determined to make a national spectacle of the affair, and the prisoner was therefore given in charge to a small party of five men, who were to take him up to Chillicothe, and at the same time carry thither the news of a gathering of the whites, which was rumored as about to take place on a most extensive scale, threatening danger and ruin to the Indian tribes on the frontier.

His arms were then bound behind his back, and his legs tied loosely, and while the rest of the tribe prepared for the war-path, the men who were to go up to Chillicothe, started on the same trail which had been followed by Amy Moss and her captors. It was a reprieve, however painful, and Dick Harvey was not so bowed down by brutality and the savage conduct of the red-skins, as that the natural characteristics of his age should be overcome. He hoped then even against hope itself.

There was one old man and four

young ones of the party, the old man being one of those few Shawnees who had shown any kindly feeling toward the suffering pale-face. A cord had been fastened to Harvey's waist, which was then attached to the tail of the horse on which the old Indian rode. The four young braves came behind, laughing, chatting, and occasionally, by way of diversifying the subject-matter of their discourse, poking the wretched victim whom they were leading to the slaughter. The trail they followed was difficult, and it was at rather an early hour that they camped under a cliff, evidently much exhausted with the events of the day. They there made a fire, piled up grass and leaves, and prepared evidently for a carouse. They had an ample supply of pork, the produce of poor Harrod's pigs, and an allowance of whisky, which was then beginning to enervate and destroy the red-men. While one of the party proceeded to cook their supper, the rest undertook to provide for the unfortunate white man. They took a piece of wood and stretched it across his breast, and to this fastened his hands. They then laid another piece across this, to which his neck and ankles were fastened, so that it was utterly impossible for him to move. This was one of their common and barbarous means of securing a prisoner.

Presently the meat was ready, and the brutal red-skins began devouring their plunder with intense satisfaction. They gave Dick one or two morsels, which he contrived to devour, as nature had exerted her supremacy, and despite his position, he was faint from hunger. Then the savages saw once more to his fastenings, and satisfied that he could do nothing, put a little wood on the fire, and laid down to sleep quite at ease as to any danger in that distant and secluded part of the forest. They were all so weary that in a very few minutes he was significantly reminded that they were asleep.

His first impulse was to try his bonds. They were fastened in a way that left no hope of his breaking them. This hope had then at once to be given up, and though there was so little chance of any plan succeeding, he did not, even in this grievous and melancholy strait, wholly despair.

But the night wore on, the wind sighed in the trees, the stars twinkled over his head, the moon rose and faded away. Exhausted, he actually slept for a moment. It seemed but a moment, and then he was awake. It was nearly day. Harvey lay about three yards from the Indians. He could not turn his head far enough to see his persecutors, but he knew by the smoke of the fire that their position was under the cliff. They had not yet moved, and Dick Harvey, a little refreshed by his night's rest, tried again to move the osier band which bound his wrist. His right hand came free away at once—the knot had slipped in the night.

At this instant a slight noise attracted the attention of the young man; he looked up and instantly recognized a white man, a tall and gaunt figure he knew full well. He was looking strangely at the Indians, and did not as yet see the prisoner. Suddenly his eye caught sight of one making signs to him, and he instantly disappeared. In a few minutes he stalked slowly out of the forest, with noiseless step—if discovered he knew that his Indian trader character (it was Ezram Cook) would protect him—and with a rapidity of action which gave life and hope to Harvey, cut his bonds, left the knife, and retreated as rapidly as he came. In five minutes he was once more on the summit of the rock, leaning on his rifle.

Dick Harvey was so stiff that full ten minutes elapsed ere he could move. He gained his feet with great difficulty, crawled to the fire, took up a gun, and then, every instant his blood circulating more freely, hurried away to where

the horse was hopped. Cutting the animal loose, he drew him gently through the wood, along the trail left by the peddler. He had not gone a hundred yards when a cry of fury and rage startled him, and he staggered as the beating of his heart grew tumultuous and wild. Then using all his energy, he mounted. A rifle-crack guided him, and then a horseman came galloping toward him.

“Turn to the right, stranger, turn to the right—keep the wind on yer left cheek; the trail's pretty good. Make tracks with yer old hoss,” he continued, as he rode up to Dick Harvey; “that they come.”

They could, indeed, be plainly heard coming crashing through the bushes behind with loud and furious yelling.

“You've a deal to answer for, stranger,” continued the peddler—“a deal to answer for. Here am I, Ezram Cook, a neutral Ingine trader, brought into a scrimmage, and a most afeared I've shot a Ingine. Now, if one of them devils sees me, my business is gone—right away—they'll skin, tar, scarify, and lynch me anyhow. But I couldn't see a fellow-critter prepared like a lamb for the slaughter.”

“My sufferings have sorely changed me in twenty-four hours, Mister Ezram Cook,” said the artist, “that you don't recognize Dick Harvey.”

“My! Jehosaphat! Thin I tell you what, Mister Harvey, I don't care if the hull bilin' of the Ingines sees me—I've done a good day's work—just keep that hemlock right afore you—go it, pony, jee! woh!”

And the peddler reined in as a small column of smoke rose above the hemlock.

“Pontius Pilate!” cried the peddler, “if we ain't done. Ingines afore, Ingines behind. Never mind, spur away. What's that?”

A yell of a very fearful nature rose in the forest, bursting so suddenly upon the ear, and appearing to be of such an unearthly character, that Dick Harvey and the peddler shuddered. It was no cry they had ever heard before, and both were already very familiar with the noises of the forest. It was not an Indian yell, it was not a wild beast, it was not an animal in pain; and the two men, who were sufficiently distant from genuine civilization to be superstitious, looked uneasily at each other.

“What is that?” asked Harvey, in a low, hushed voice, almost forgetting the Indians behind.

“Rattle-snakes and henbane!” cried Ezram Cook, turning rather pale; “I don't know.”

Up it rose again, that yell—once, twice, thrice—until it seemed to make the very arches of the forest ring again, every time more shrill, more horrid, more unearthly.

“On! on!” cried Dick, suddenly; “it is a human voice, shrieking for help.”

“I think you're about right, Mister Harvey,” said the peddler; “so here goes.”

The two men gave rein to their horses, and darted down an acclivity which led to the hemlock tree. In ten minutes' hard galloping, they entered an open glade, and reined in their horses with a shudder of horror. A sight met their view which, not so common then as it has been since, made them look at one another with amazement and confusion.

The shrieks had ceased an instant, and they thought that all was over.

On a pile of loose wood, that threatened every minute to give way, stood the negro Spiky Jonas. His arms were tied behind his back, and a rope was round his neck, so placed that if he sunk from exhaustion, he must be hung, while the same would happen if the wood under his feet gave way. There he was, with eyes starting out of his head, with a face of hideous hue, turned imploringly toward the two horsemen.

“Now, Massa Harvey—don't let a poor nigger hang—now

Massa Harvey, cut him down, tell all—tell every ting—nebbur hurt you, Massa Harvey."

"Silence, traitor. You brought death into the Moss—you tried to betray the whole garrison to the Indians. Doubtless it was Custaloga hung you up, and certainly I do not mean to interfere with his judgment."

The eyes of the negro rolled in their sockets, his whole frame shuddered, he raised himself on tiptoe and looked uneasily around, he turned an imploring glance on Dick Harvey, who made a gesture of disgust.

"Now, Master Harvey," said Ezram Cook, gravely, "you don't mean to say you'll hang this black cretter. Consider the cruelty of the thing. Besides, he's valuable property, worth a mint of dollars. He's skared enough—cut him loose."

"No!" replied Harvey; and then he added in a low tone, "be sure Custa is only frightening him. He's close handy, I know. So let us look for him. There come the Indians too—to cover!"

The negro, seeing them move away, began again to utter his wild shrieks of despair, shrieks that made the young artist shudder. Still he persevered and quietly disappeared along a trail on the edge of the small open space, just as the Indians came bounding up, themselves curious to discover the cause of these horrid cries, imprecations, promises, and threats, which came in a fearful stream from the negro's throat.

Harvey and Ezram dismounted and turned, rifle in hand. Feeling certain that aid was near, they determined to make a stand.

"My!" cried the negro, drawing a long breath as the Indians came up; "yah be friends. Make haste, ole red-skin—cut de rope—won't I skin dem whites now!"

And the negro laughed a laugh of wild exultation as the Shawnees hurried up to aid their friend. But dire was the dismay of red-skins and of the black, as four rifles were discharged, and then out burst Custaloga, Harrod, Harvey, and Ezram on the band, Harrod bounding ahead of all the rest, flourishing his gun in one hand and waving his ax in the other.

Ten minutes later, to avoid details of a scene of sanguinary horror, the four white men were complete masters of the field, and the body of the negro lay beside that of his allies. In a moment of eagerness he appeared to have moved too rapidly, and the wood to have slipped from under his feet. Not one of the four had intended the death of the negro. They simply intended to obtain from him, by means of terror, a confession of his accomplices, one of whom Custaloga suspected, though he had no proof of his guilt. The negro had stoutly refused to confess any thing, and Custaloga and the Silent Hunter had left him to his reflections, persuaded that half an hour would induce him to alter his determination.

"It's a plaguy bad job," said Ezram Cook, shaking his head; "a plaguy bad job. I wud rather not kill the salvages, as worthy John Smith says; but they thirsted for our blood. But that wur cold blood!"

"It is done. When the lightning blasts the oak, it can not give it life again. The black was wicked, but his Manitou would have punished him. But wise men do not wag their tongues; the negro is dead; let no more be said."

"Custaloga is right," said Dick Harvey; "it is a very bad affair; but the best thing we can do is to say that Spiky Jonas is dead and there end the matter."

"How did you escape?" asked the young Wyandot, rather gruffly.

Dick Harvey smiled, took the other's hand, and told his story succinctly. He then demanded Custaloga's narrative in return. Custaloga told all that had passed, and then related his determination

of releasing Amy at any cost that very night. All heard him with intense interest, and the plan of action was discussed. Ezram Cook simply listened and nodded his head. Harvey was used to yield to Custaloga, so that the Indian was really master of the circumstance.

He told them that he believed the cave to be guarded only by two men, who, however, could, if they made a bold defense, do them terrible damage if they openly attacked the place. His idea, therefore, was to enter the cave in the night, trusting to the assistance which the jealous Indian girl—the affianced wife of Tecumseh—would give them.

Dick acquiesced in this the more readily that he was exhausted with fatigue, and his limbs were sore and stiff with what he had suffered.

They had not been gone above ten minutes when there was a movement on the field; and the negro, who had in reality been cut down by one of the Indians, unperceived by the whites, rose with difficulty, and crawled away from the scene of his terrible trial.

The four friends chose a spot where the beeches rose towering to the skies, like the spires of village churches in a deep wood—where all around was deep and gloomy forest, far away on every side. Here they determined to rest, Custaloga and the Silent Hunter to watch in turns, as they had had some rest on the previous night.

The day seemed a perfect age to Custaloga, who, however, restrained his impatience, perfectly well aware that by husbanding his strength he was advancing the interests of Amy. Toward nightfall he drew the Silent Hunter to his side, Harvey and Ezram still sleeping, and the following interview—we can not call it conversation—took place:

"Harrod," said the Indian, slowly, laying his hand on the other's shoulder, "there is love at my heart for the cousin of her who was the Singing-bird of thy wigwam."

A fierce gleam shot from the eyes of the huge borderman, and his whole frame shook with mortal agony.

"Harrod," whispered Custaloga, with a heaving chest, and speaking according to his new education, "I can feel for you. You will never repeat what I say; but what Clara was to the man with the big heart, Amy Moss is to me."

Harrod raised his head and looked curiously at him. There was even a certain softness in his eyes. "She is lost to you—Amy must be lost to me."

A strange, odd smile played about the Silent Hunter's mouth, then vanished.

"She will wed no red-skin, and Squire Barton is her future husband; but, what the air is to the eagle, so is Amy Moss unto me. I can be to her only the faithful hound, or watch-dog—good, I will be so. Custaloga loves Amy of the Moss more than his life, and every friend who aids him to serve her is his brother; but the big-hearted white man can not go with Custa to-night—there are two tracks; they must part."

Harrod looked half angrily, half inquiringly at Custa.

"My brother's heart is very sad, his hate is like the hate of the tiger; it can only be cooled by blood—he is right. The Shawnees have killed his wife. Let him take a scalp for every hair of her head—but in the cave of the Ohio there are women and children, and Amy must not hear their shrieks."

When he ceased, Harrod made no reply, but closed his eyes and folded his arms.

"Say, Harrod, how shall it be?" said Custaloga, anxiously.

Harrod looked up and took the Indian's hand, which he wrung warmly, and by a nod of the head intimated that he yielded.

"Thank you," cried Custaloga, warily; "Custa will never forget."

He then awakened his compan-

ions, and ever thoughtful of what they had to do, distributed a portion of the food that remained from a deer they had shot during the morning. Then the horses were fastened to trees, and the four men, armed to the teeth and as silent as any ghosts of departed chiefs and warriors who might be supposed to haunt these woods, went upon their way toward the Great Cave on the Ohio river.

Custaloga led the party, the others following in Indian file, an arrangement which it had been agreed should be strictly adhered to. It was not long ere they were on the banks of the beautiful river.

"Hist!" said Custaloga, in a low and somewhat husky tone, at which all the men crowded round him; "if we part—Glen Hut."

All understood these brief words, and then Custaloga setting the example, a small hickory stick in his hand, all entered the stream and ventured under cover of the darkness into the waters of the river, which at the time was not so much swollen as on many occasions.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BOAT AHoy!

SIR CHARLES CARSTONE lived in a small, elegantly-furnished house in one of those streets which once were accounted fashionable.

He and Lady Carstone sat in a small breakfast-parlor, sipping their chocolate, each on their own side of the table, while Master George, a tall boy of thirteen, red-haired, freckled, spoilt, saucy, with every quality to make him his parents' darling and the world's nuisance, stood on the other side playing with a dog, a kind of Italian gray-hound.

Lady Carstone was a portly dame of forty, with a round face, overdressed, uneducated, and extremely vulgar; but she was rich.

Alderman Pepper had his foible, however—a very common foible in his country, one which marks the weakness of "civilization." He worshiped the aristocracy, he venerated a lord, he shook in his shoes if he happened to meet a duke.

Sir Charles Carstone was a being to dazzle the worthy alderman. Had any man alive attempted to cheat Mr. Alderman Pepper out of five pounds, he would have failed; but he was coolly fleeced of twenty thousand pounds by the polished courtier with the utmost ease. He even felt obliged to the man for taking the money. He had also taken his daughter.

Poor Lady Carstone was well meaning, though she was ignorant, while the society of the aristocracy with whom she associated, instead of improving, almost ruined her.

When breakfast was over Lady Carstone retired to her chamber to dress, the boy ran out to join a groom, who had a pony to show him, and Sir Charles was alone.

He had an appointment at twelve, and was about to make a movement to keep it, when one John Barty was announced.

"Let him come in," said the baronet, somewhat quickly.

A man entered. The visitor was a man of middle height, slight, and somewhat bowed in the back, with a long, cadaverous countenance, a hooked nose, little restless gray eyes, and a general air of poverty and distress about him. He bowed meekly to the baronet, who threw himself into a chair and motioned to the other to be seated.

"And pray, Master Barty," said the baronet, in a stately tone, "what may procure me the pleasure of your company this morning? None of my bills are yet due, and I did not think of asking for a new loan, though, now you are here—"

"Sir Charles!" exclaimed the other, "not money always—do not talk of money like it was bread, or cheese, or dust; money is the thing to take the hat off to, to think of reverently, to use when it is really necessary."

"Upon my word, John Barty, money is a very fine thing, but I would not think of it as you do for

all the gold of the Indies. You'll be murdered some of these nights. Why, the very look of you proclaims a Cræsus."

"Hush!" said the other; "why say I am rich? You know I am not. I try to be; I make a little here, a little there; I starve myself, I go errands, I introduce gentlemen to moneyed men—and, Sir Charles, why do I do it?"

"Ah, why?—that is a question I have often thought of asking you," said the baronet.

"I have a daughter, Sir Charles."

"A daughter?"

"A daughter, whom I wish to leave happy, Sir Charles, and for whom I do all that I do—a daughter, the image of what her mother was, and she was beautiful."

"Upon my word, Mr. Barty, you quite interest me; and if I had not a most special appointment with the prince I should ask you to continue."

"Excuse me, Sir Charles; but I am forgetting important business. Have you not a secret in America, of—?"

"What means this introduction?" exclaimed the baronet.

"Your secret is discovered," said the miser, coolly. "Your cousin, Andrew Carstone, has left for America with an old pal of Dick Blunt's."

The baronet rose hastily, and moved impatiently across the room, clenched his fists, and seemed painfully agitated.

"Barty," he said, stopping suddenly, "this is terrible bad news. But how do you know?"

"Well, sir, I was down at Greenwich yesterday, and I saw that thief, Corney Ragg, coming down the street with a bag in his hand, dressed like a gentleman's groom."

"Who is Corney Ragg?"

"The man where Dick lodged, when we fetched him that night."

"Go on."

"Eh, Ragg," says I, 'you're mighty fine; where are you going?' 'All right,' says he, 'you won't split?' 'Split be hanged,' says I. 'Then it's all right, Barty—I'm going to Meriky with Mr. Carstone, to fetch home his daughter, as a villain called Sir Charles Carstone stole from him.'"

"Sdeath," cried the baronet, "then he knows all."

"It appears so, Sir Charles," said the money-lender.

"Go on. While you speak I may collect my thoughts."

"Just then a gentleman came up and Ragg joined him. They hailed a boat and went on board a barque bound for New York. It sailed directly."

"This is terrible. Who could have betrayed me? But he may not know—and yet the secret voyage to America, without communicating with me. Barty!"

"Yes, sir," said the miser, looking down on the ground meekly. He felt the attack coming.

"I must have two hundred pounds by this evening, and my passage taken for America!" exclaimed the baronet, looking hard at him.

"Two hundred pounds!" said Barty; "it can't be done."

"Hearken, Barty—it must be done. I am in no humor to bandy words. Time is every thing. I must act first. The furniture of this house is new and good—take it as security, but bring me the money."

"I dare say, Sir Charles, I may find a friend to assist me—the security is good; but, you may be gone some months—Lady Carstone is very changeable."

"What now?"

"You may be gone months."

"Well?"

"Lady Carstone is very changeable," said Barty, timidly.

"Well, speak up; do not distract me."

"Lady Carstone might wish to change or sell it."

"Nonsense! I will leave strict instructions."

"You had better leave me in the house, Sir Charles. They will want a steward over them in your absence."

The baronet laughed grimly.

The idea of leaving such a master over Lady Carstone was too ludicrous.

"So, good Barty, you shall be steward in my absence—keep good guard over my house; but now go, and let the money be forthcoming."

John Barty bowed and left the room.

"There has been some treachery," said Sir Charles, moodily; "and yet I paid the villains well—they should have been true. If he finds her, all is lost. He must know it is my doing; and then adieu, even my pension. But if I can arrive in America before him, or with him, and find that Hackett, it shall go hard but I will yet prevent the fatal result."

He then left the room and went to his wife's chamber, to whom he bluntly communicated his intention of going to America—a piece of news which Lady Carstone heard with astonishment, but without regret. She had no reason to lament because her husband gave her a few months of liberty.

Sir Charles spent the day in making his preparations, in bidding adieu to his boon companions, and at seven o'clock in the evening he waited for John Barty in his room. That individual came punctually. He was dressed in a holiday suit, and had a parcel under his arm. He was clean-shaved, and had fresh linen on.

"By my faith, Mr. Barty," cried the baronet, "you are quite a beau—you do me proud. I suppose this is in honor of my poor house."

"Why, Sir Charles, I could hardly expect the servants to mind me, if I did not look like a gentleman."

"No, certainly not," and Sir Charles laughed heartily.

"You are amused, sir," said the money-lender.

"No; but have you the money?" asked the other, quickly.

"Here it is, sir; and here is the bill of sale."

"Bill of sale?" cried the baronet.

"If you repay me, it is void," said John Barty, meekly.

"It is well. You are an honest money-lender in your way."

The man bowed and placed the document for the other's signature. He took up a pen and signed hastily. The miser then handed him the money.

"And about a passage to America?" asked the baronet, secreting the money about his person.

"A worthy Captain Douglas sails at daybreak—he would have you on board to-night. Is all ready?"

"Every thing is ready."

"Does her ladyship know of my position in the house?"

"That is a pleasure I have reserved for her until the last moment, Mr. Barty. She will want some consolation for my absence."

Barty grinned, and would have spoken, but Lady Carstone at that instant entered.

"So, my dear, you are really going," said she, with an affected drawl, rubbing her dry eyes very hard with a pocket-handkerchief.

"Really, my dear, I am sorry to say, the business on which I go is so imperative, that I must tear myself away."

"Well, you know best, Sir Charles; I am not at all a business woman—I never was."

"You ought to have been madam, considering the time you spent in your worthy father's shop."

"Sir Charles," said the lady, looking imposing and dignified, "what shop do you allude to?"

"The clothier's shop to be sure, my Lady Carstone."

"My father," said she to John Barty, "was a banker."

"And breeches-maker—had lots from him—bought a pair once a week when I was courting you, just as an excuse for getting round. But time is passing, Lady Carstone, and I must go. Good-by, my dear; make yourself happy and comfortable; for fear you should be dull,

I have left Barty in charge of the house; he'll find you in money while I am gone."

And the baronet, after an affectionate embrace, went out.

"Sir Charles," cried the money-lender, "I never promised to advance my lady a penny."

And he ran after the baronet, without replying to a series of angry questions which Lady Carstone addressed to him. In his hurry he left the deed of sale on the table. Curiosity is the characteristic of women like the baronet's wife. She took up the paper and read it, then smiled, folded it up, and put it in her pocket. At that instant the money-lender came running back, to discover that the document had disappeared.

"My lady! my lady!" he gasped, looking round the room. "A piece of paper—a deed—a business document."

"It is quite safe," said the baronet's lady in dulcet tones, "quite safe, and Mr. Barty shall have it back if he behaves himself. I can not think, however, of letting Sir Charles part with his furniture for so small a sum; I am too much a woman of business."

Barty darted a look of rage and despair at the lady, and ran to the baronet, who was getting impatient.

That night the baronet, under an assumed name, accompanied by John Barty, went down to the water's edge below the hospital at Greenwich. It was a cold and gusty night, and the ship could be dimly seen across the stream.

Next minute the boat pulled right up to the strand, the baronet's luggage, which had been brought down by strange porters, was put on board; he shook hands with John Barty, and cheerily oh! the boat put off toward the Sir Walter Raleigh, bound for New York.

At daylight the vessel sailed.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CAVE DELIVERY.

THERE is a sublimity in the vast arch of heaven to which, however, being accustomed from our childhood, it does not inspire us with that overpowering awe which so grand a spectacle would arouse in the mind of one who opened his eyes to it for the first time; and yet no man ever entered within the deep arches and gloom of a vast cave, without feeling a kind of dread, or, at all events, an impulse of admiration, at a vastness which is so little beside the great vault of heaven.

Amy Moss, when first dragged to her prison beside the waters of the Ohio, occupied as a chamber recess in the very back of the cave, but was allowed during the day to roam about at will. None suspected her of any plan to escape. A feeble woman and a child could not be supposed capable of fleeing from a place guarded by two savage old warriors, and by women scarcely more gentle, if we except the Indian girl, who was in that first freshness of love which makes even the rudest less rude, and the naturally sweet and refined so pleasing.

Amy had little opportunity for meditating any particular plan, being closely watched, so that she generally, to avoid the prying eyes of her captors, kept within her cell, talking with the child. She told him of the cave and its legends, and amused the child by tales invented on the spot, and so doing, amused herself. But indeed her thoughts were far away with others, and her stories were somewhat disconnected.

It was some time after the dusk of evening had set in, and the Indian girl slept in the cell the sound sleep of youth and innocence. The boy, too, lay hushed and still, and none moved in the cavern. But Amy could not rest. The night was sultry and hot, her thoughts were burning and anxious, the cave was close and unwholesome. After debating with herself for some time, she determined to rise, and if she

could not breathe the fresh air of the river, at all events to wander awhile in the larger part of the cave.

Having come to this determination, she rose with extreme caution and crept out of the little division occupied by herself and her more immediate companions. She paused on the threshold and looked out. Above was the vast canopy of heaven, that seemed to rise to infinite space, displaying no roof or check to the black darkness of night; behind she heard the water of a spring falling into a deep hollow, the bottom of which had never been fathomed. Before her was the opening by which the cave was entered, and by this penetrated a glimmer of the moon. About ten feet below was the fire of the Indians, and round it the whole party was congregated, either sleeping or waking.

There were seven women and two men, all to a certain extent armed, and to pass them Amy knew to be a useless task, as they would wake at the first step that came near their camp-fire. The ordinary path to the entrance of the cave was beside these sleepers. But Amy had already taken sufficient notice of the mysteries of the cavern, to be aware that there was another road. True, it was dangerous and unpromising, but in her present state of mind, longing for a sight of the outward world, she determined to try it.

She crept then across the cave, like some ghost in middle-age romance, treading with slow and cautious step, until her outstretched hands came into contact with the opposite wall. She then paused, and again listened. After a few moments of hesitation she felt about for a ledge that commenced somewhere in this direction, and ascended to a spot above the usual orifice by which the cave was left.

There was a similar ledge, of somewhat different character, on the other side.

This, however, Amy did not know, else, it being much wider and safer, she would have selected it, especially as it led directly to the ordinary outlet of the cave.

She commenced her ascent with a beating heart, the very sound of which she imagined, in her present state of mind, awoke too loudly the echoes of the cavern. The ledge was rough and stony, and sometimes rose and sometimes fell. Amy had actually to feel her way, holding now to crags that projected, now crawling on her hands and knees. Once or twice her heart smote her, and she felt inclined to give way, but an invincible desire to witness the light of heaven impelled her on.

Presently she halted and almost fell off the ledge, so unconquerable and sudden was her terror. The light was in the center between her and the opposite side of the cave, and the fire, which burnt very low, cast from its hot embers a lurid glare on the small spot around the sleepers. And yet on the other wall of the cavern, on the dark rock, Amy distinctly saw the outline of a figure so exactly like her own, that she could not doubt it was her shadow.

She breathed not, she stooped low, and looked across with fixed eyes at the spectral shadow that was there almost motionless. The side of the rock on which a ray of moonlight fell faintly was perpendicular from the ledge alluded to for some distance upward, and it was on this surface that Amy distinctly saw a human shadow moving. After a few minutes she gained all her courage and moved forward. The shadow moved also, but did not follow her; it shook with a tremulous motion, and then stood still.

Amy Moss drew a long breath, and looked behind no more, but advanced slowly along the ledge, with palpitating heart, stopping now and then to listen. She was now above the group of sleepers, and next moment was in view of

a narrow aperture at the end of her rude path which led into the open air. She crept very cautiously, and in a few minutes was on a platform; a few feet above that which was generally used by those entering the cavern.

It was a lovely night, and Amy leaned against the rock a moment to enjoy its freshness and its beauty. She could not see the Ohio at her feet; but she gazed on the other shore, and half-way across, and over the dark forest that stretched on all sides; and far over all she looked as if seeking to drive into the distance to where stood her home.

Suddenly she turned, and became aware that she was not alone on the platform.

She shuddered as she recognized Spiky Jonas the negro, and would have retreated, understanding the shadow that had played upon the wall. The negro was sitting on the ledge panting for breath, and swinging himself backward and forward. He had spent the whole day in coming there, and had arrived in time to warn the inhabitants of the cave of the dangers which threatened them.

But retreat was impossible. The negro sprang up, and caught her by the arm.

"Wah you go?" he said, in a husky, menacing voice.

"I am breathing the fresh air," replied Amy, much alarmed.

"No true—you try run—dis child know it berry well."

"I have left the child asleep—do you think I would leave him?"

The negro let go his hold and folded his arms. Amy leaned against the rock. The negro raised his right arm, and began to narrate the story of his fearful escape. The young girl heard him with extreme horror, heightened by the air of menace which accompanied his words.

"I am very sorry, Jonas—it was cruel, very cruel," she said, soothingly.

"You say dat cruel," hissed the negro; "what dey say when I kill you; yah! yah! yah!"

Amy shuddered. Gazing full at him in the moonlight, there was something of unmistakable madness about him. His terrible trial had turned his brain. At the moment he was unarmed, which was perhaps the reason she was still alive; but how long would this endure?

"Spiky Jonas," said she, gently, "you will never kill Amy Moss—you could not do it—no! you used to play with her once!"

"Yes! Spiky Jonas, him berry happy den—now him all gone—him not fit to live—him die, die altogether, Amy die, Spiky die—come!"

Seizing her with one hand he pointed to the river below. Amy knew that they stood upon the edge of a precipice, which, though not deep, and having at its foot bushes and grass, still was a dangerous fall.

"Come!" he said.

"Surrender, wretch!" said a voice in menacing tones.

"Nebber," cried the negro, as he felt himself grasped from behind, and turning, saw Custa and Harrod on the platform, and the heads of Harvey and Cook peering over the edge of the rock. As he spoke, the unfortunate negro, whose mind had partly given way under the fearful influence of revenge, hate, and suffering, plunged over the edge of the cliff, and fell headlong into the depth below.

Amy fainted.

When she recovered, she found herself surrounded by her friends.

"Where is he?" asked she wildly, gazing around.

"Who was 'it'?" asked Custa, anxiously.

"Spiky Jonas," she said in a trembling voice.

"Spiky Jonas!" said Custa, a shudder—"impossible!"

"I see'd him dead," cried Ezram, starting back, "it are his spurrit!"

"I'll believe in ghosts forevermore," said Harvey, solemnly.

"It is no ghost, but the negro himself who was cut down, and

lay as if dead to escape your cruelty, Custa—it was wrong to put the poor wretch to death."

"Never," replied Custaloga, after some further explanation, "never was I more glad. We meant not to slay the black. Poor fellow, he is gone now; but come, Miss Amy, the road is safe."

Harrod made a sign to enter the cave.

"The child, Custa!" exclaimed Amy; "we can not leave the child."

"True," replied the young man, gravely; "how many men are there?"

"Two," said Amy.

"They sleep soundly, but the cave is high above the ground."

"Yes," said Amy, "but inside we hear no sound from without. I could go in and fetch the child—the girl would explain to the warriors."

"Yes," replied Custa in a whisper, glancing at Harrod, "bid the warriors hide. Tell them Harrod is here—that will be enough. He has promised not to touch the women; let the men be saved too."

"Noble Custa," said Amy, shaking his hand, "I will go."

"Wait," replied Custa; "let them know we are here."

He whispered a word to his companions, who advanced to the proper mouth of the cave, entered it, and discharged their rifles upward into the hollows of the cavern.

The effect was terrific—the echoes seemed as if they would never die away. There was a crash like thunder, a roar, and then a rumbling noise of a kind perfectly indescribable. Amy stood back perfectly speechless.

Then Custa spoke in a loud voice, told those inside that resistance was useless, the mouth of the cave being held by white rifles. Any attempt at resistance would only bring upon them certain destruction. No answer came to these words, and then, the four men holding guard over the entrance, Amy went in, speaking aloud, so as to be recognized. The cave appeared lighter viewed from this point, and our heroine at once saw that all had disappeared from around the watch-fire.

In a few minutes Amy was at the back of the cave, and here, behind a projecting rock, she found the whole party, men, women and children. The Indian girl, whose grace and beauty had won for her so many epithets, but who was commonly known as Blue-bird, advanced quickly, and caught her by the wrist.

"What they want—eh? fire gun all heap—eh? Bad pale-face, kill woman," she exclaimed, speaking with extreme volubility.

"They will not hurt a hair of a woman's head—they fired but to let you know their strength," said Amy, earnestly.

"Then what they want?" said Blue-bird; "kill men?"

The two old men stood like statues, as if not hearing a word that passed, but in reality drinking in every sound.

"There is one, the husband of Clara of the Crow's Nest," replied Amy, solemnly, "who would take the life of the two warriors."

The whole party shuddered when they heard this implacable foe was at their gates.

"But Custaloga is there, and Custaloga will not consent—go!" she continued, turning to the warriors, "go—let my friends see none but women—Amy Moss answers for their lives with hers."

The two old Shawnees made no reply, but glided away toward the gloomy recesses of the cavern, and in a few minutes had disappeared in some place inaccessible to ordinary eyes. There were, indeed, small holes and recesses in the cavern of the Ohio, where a man could have lain hid for days.

Amy now called to her friends. Custaloga and Harrod were by her side in a moment, but Ezra Cook and Harvey still held the entrance. The child made one bound, gave

a shrill cry, and was clasped in his father's arms.

"Pa—dear pa—where have you been?—where's ma?" sobbed the boy.

Harrod replied by a growl so fierce that the women, who had been staring with awe at that huge man, so fierce, so powerful, so terrible, started back alarmed. And well might they feel dismay, as, illuminated by a brand from the fire, held by Blue-bird, they saw his eyes glare around like those of a wild beast, and his fingers clutch his long knife.

"Come!" said Custaloga, gravely, laying his hand upon his shoulder.

Harrod loosened the hold on his knife, and carrying his boy, turned to go.

"Good-by, Blue-bird!" said Amy, kindly; "when peace is between my people and your people, come and see me."

"Ah!" cried Custa, starting as if stung by remorse; "Blue-bird—your father, what of him?"

"He was slain by the red hand of the Eagle Eye," said the girl, mournfully.

"No!" replied Custa, earnestly; "I found him wounded, and I saved his life—I left him in a cache—he was lame, but there was water and food. Blue-bird will find him alive."

He then explained his meeting with the wounded warrior, how he saved him, and how in the hurry of subsequent events he had quite omitted to see him. He had, however, food for days, and unlimited water, but was, he suspected, too weak to get out of the cave without assistance. The girl heard the tale of the young Wyandot with admiration. The young man then explained minutely the position of the cache, and this done, he turned from the Indians and was about to depart, when Amy spoke:

"The negro," said she, in a low whisper, and with a shudder, "he may not be dead."

Custaloga explained the accident which had occurred, and requested four of the women to come and see to the matter. The women readily agreed, and the young girl accompanied the party. In a few minutes they were all on the platform, which was occupied by Ezra Cook only. Harvey had disappeared.

"Where is he?" asked Custa.

"Well, that ar' nigger is hard to kill; he's been a-moaning and crying, and I s'pect Harvey's gone down to finish him."

"Never!" cried Amy, impetuously; "I know Harvey better than that."

"Thank you," said Custaloga, simply.

"Come down," cried Harvey from below, "the poor fellow is all of a heap. I expect he may be saved."

Custaloga, after requesting the others to lead Amy to the water's edge, hurried by a circuitous path to the bottom of the cliff, where, by the light of the moon, he saw the negro lying nearly on his face, with his hand grasping the bough of a tree which he had broken off in his fall.

"Are you much hurt?" said Custaloga gently, all his animosity now gone.

"I's done for!" groaned Jonas, his groans turning to yells when they turned him round.

It soon was evident that his body was only bruised, but his arm was broken. Knowing the skill of the Indians in these matters, Custaloga had no compunction in handing the negro over to the women, who with a few sticks and boughs proceeded quietly to make a litter on which to carry him.

"And now, Jonas," said Custa, gravely, "twice has your life been saved—tempt it not again. You must never show your face to the judge; but, when you are well, let me know, and if you will promise to cease your evil conduct, your wife shall join you."

"You no Indian," replied Spiky Jonas, amazed at the other's speech.

Harvey and his companion now

left him to the Indian women, and hurriedly rejoined the party, who waited for them on the bank of the beautiful river. They halted a moment to confer as to their proceedings.

"The water is deep," said Custaloga to Amy, "and you can never walk."

"What is to be done?" replied Amy, much distressed.

"Harvey, I think you might bring round one of the horses," exclaimed Custa, after a moment's reflection.

Harvey nodded his head, and without a moment's hesitation entered the stream, and, slowly and carefully following the ledge, was in a few minutes lost to sight. The rest sat down upon the bank to await his return.

The moon had disappeared though it was not late, and darkness now veiled the whole scene. It was not, therefore, without a shudder that Amy viewed the prospect of traveling that night. There was, however, consolation in the fact of their having horses. But her thoughts soon turned to her father, to Jane, and that dear home she longed so much to see.

Suddenly Custaloga bounded to his feet. The long, low, wailing cry of a bird, which at that time of year did not frequent the river, had roused him.

"That is Harvey, and there is danger," he cried.

The men clutched their rifles, and Amy caught the child to her arms. For a few minutes all was still, and then Harvey was seen making his way through the water, holding his gun on high, but he led no horse. In another minute he was close to them.

"The horses are gone," he said, in a tone of deep dejection; "there have been Indians on the bank. I think I heard them up river; but no time is to be lost."

Custa made no reply, but catching Amy in his arms before she had time to make any objection, entered the stream and led the way. Harrod followed with his child, while Harvey and Cook, after a whispered conference, darted up the bank by a path which, though difficult, they knew was practicable to men.

The current was swift and strong, and Custaloga was almost exhausted by the superhuman exertions he had made for several days. It was, therefore, by slow degrees that he advanced with his precious burden in his arms, his ears open to every sound, and his heart beating with a feeling of alarm and dread he had never before experienced.

"I could walk," said Amy, gently seeking to disengage herself.

"Impossible," replied he; "do not speak. There is danger in the air."

They were within a short distance of the shore, and Custa distinctly saw figures moving on the bank. He stood still and turned. He then first missed two of his companions. Half guessing what had happened, he gave one of his usual signals, and this being answered, hurried forward, and the whole party were once more together. No words were spoken, but away they went along the skirt of the forest, crossed a small strip of wood, and then found themselves in a barren clearing, which it would have been shorter to have crossed than skirted. They were about to make use of the trail that could be traced out by a practiced eye even at that hour, when they distinctly heard a body of Indians talking at some distance.

All sunk to the ground and listened. A few words explained the plan of the Indians.

A prowling Shawnee had found the horses, with which he had galloped away to his companions, an outlying war-party. It was instantly guessed that the cavern on the Ohio was the destination of the scouts, and the Shawnees were hurrying to catch the white men, as they expected, in a trap. They moved carefully, as if quite certain of what they were about.

Suddenly Custaloga whispered

low to be ready, and his own rifle fell to a level, while Amy shut her eyes and stopped her ears. The Indians were running within ten yards of them. They, however, lay in the deep shadow of the trees, and the Shawnees, little suspecting their own danger and the proximity of the party they sought, hurried by, and buried themselves in the forest.

In a few minutes their footsteps were no longer heard, and then away went the fugitives in solemn silence until they reached the well-known neighborhood of the Glen Hut, which appeared as if it had been abandoned as usual to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field; for who could tell that there had taken place an interview between Squire Barton and the unfortunate Kate, of such importance to the fate of both those personages? Custa, however, left his companions on the skirt of the wood, at some little distance from the place, and advanced alone into the clearing. The night was dark, the heavens were obscured by clouds, and there appeared every sign of a storm. Custaloga, aware how impossible it was for Amy and the child to reach the Block-house that night, had determined to rest for some hours—in fact, until day-break, when he could guide his companions by secret and secluded paths to the home they all, save one, so wished to gain.

The Silent Hunter's intentions none could make out. He walked so gently, so quietly beside his boy, holding him by the hand, carrying him at times, that all thought him moved from his more terrible purpose of revenge.

Custaloga stalked across the clearing, entered the hut, felt about in a secret corner for flint and steel, and soon made a blaze, to his great surprise finding every sign of a very recent fire. Upon this, however, he did not pause to reflect much at the time, as the signal was given, and the whole party were approaching the house.

It was not without a feeling of awe that Amy gazed upon a hut, the history of which had been related to her; and seen as it was in the gloom, amid those fitful gusts, and with that canopy of black above, with tall leafless trees around, victims of the girdling system, it was not an inviting place for one used to such home luxuries and comforts as Amy Moss. The wild solitude, the hour of midnight, the sound of rushing waters, the distant moaning of the trees, all carried terror to her heart. And yet, her position had not been so hopeful and enviable for many days.

But the clearing was soon crossed, and the hut reached, where the cheerful blaze of a fire acted with considerable force to reassure Amy. Ezra Cook, too, was delighted, for he was weary, both with physical fatigue and mental anxiety. Harvey was too elated to feel the fatigue which in reality weighed him down.

The place being announced as safe, the whole party entered the hut. Amy silently took a place beside the fire with little Willy; Harrod cast his huge frame on the ground as if to sleep, while Custa and Harvey drew forth from their own and the peddler's wallets all the provender they could muster. Supper was consumed in silence, and then a conference was held.

"Miss Moss," said Custaloga, speaking, in deference to his mistress, without figures or tropes, "you must sleep beside the child, but it will be right for the men to watch."

"I am of your opinion," replied Harvey, whose manner of speaking in polite company always astonished Ezra Cook; "I could not sleep."

"But," began Amy, "this will never do. You must all be weary. Could not one of you watch in turns?"

"There are many ways of at tack," said Custaloga, submissively, as if he disliked to differ from Amy in even the most trifling way. "They must all be decked. I propose—" continued he,

"that Harrod should outlie to the right, Harvey to the left, Ezram Cook behind the hut, overlooking the river, while I stand sentry over the hut door;" and his voice shook a little as he showed his anxious desire for the post of honor.

Ere he had finished speaking, Harrod rose and moved away to the right without a moment's hesitation; Harvey prepared to imitate him, taking up his rifle and bidding adieu to Amy; while Ezram Cook, cursing the Indians with all his heart, went out and posted himself on a ledge behind the house. Custaloga remained alone with Amy, who looked rather graver and more stern than she had done when in the company of the whole party.

"There is a pile of leaves and grass, Miss Moss," said Custaloga, "in the corner, and here is Harvey's blanket coat. The sooner you lie down the better, as I must let the fire fall. It has already burnt too long."

"Custa," said Amy, in a low, timid tone, very unusual with her. "Yes," replied he.

"Do not go further than the door—I shall never sleep if I know you are more distant," continued Amy, gently.

"I will watch by the door," said Custaloga, quietly.

He then drew the ashes over the embers of the fire, and going out into the open air, sat down on the ground, his back against the fallen door, his rifle on his knees, his heart beating so tumultuously that at first he felt quite unfit for his duties. Soon, however, his forest education gained the upper hand, and he was once more the careful sentry guarding the treasure he loved best on earth.

The clouds sped quickly across the darkened heavens, the wind howled amid the tree-tops, whistling, croaking, rushing round the hut, making eddies of leaves, and lying away in the deep chasm behind the house, over which Ezram Cook nodded and dozed with the fearful belief that he was the very perfection of a sentry. But there was no other sound. Nature seemed to sleep; and it seemed as if the forests for the time were quite abandoned by all living things.

Custaloga tried to detect the slightest evidence of the presence of Harvey and Harrod close at hand, but he could hear nothing save the guarded movements of the wolves in the clearing, which, as usual, had followed in the track of a party of whites. He listened, too, for the sound of the soft, low breathing of Amy; but, despite the quickness and sensitiveness of his ear, he could hear no sound.

And there he sat motionless and still, keeping himself awake only by great efforts, and succeeding, which unfortunately was not the case with any of the other guardians of the hut. In every instance the immense fatigues of the previous days overcame their vigilance and watchfulness.

But, terrible was to be their waking.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FIGHT FOR LIFE.

SUDDENLY Custaloga started as if a serpent had stung him, so surprised was he at the interruption to his thoughts.

"Custa," said the soft voice of Amy Moss close to his shoulder.

"Miss Amy," was all he could reply.

"I can not sleep—the gloom of this place, and my anxiety to be home, have made me feverish and restless. If I do not disturb you, I would watch with you an hour; perhaps then I may sleep."

"Miss Amy knows," replied Custaloga, "that her company is the greatest happiness Custaloga can enjoy."

"You overrate the little I have done for you," said Amy in tremulous tones.

"Little!" exclaimed Custa. "Little! you know not half you have done for me. You found me a savage, hating the whites, look-

ing on killing and scalping as a duty, and you have made me see that all this is vain and wicked."

"I am pleased to hear you speak thus, Custa," said Amy, gently.

"And do you call it little to have taught me to read?" continued Custa.

"But never did youth of fourteen learn to read so easily," said Amy.

"Yes, I know it. 'Tis strange; but I don't seem to have learnt then for the first time. Never mind—you taught me, and I read, and my savage mind was softened; I knew the pleasure of knowledge. I continued to learn, and in seven years, you, who were children when you first found me, have made me an educated man."

"And yet you remain an Indian," said Amy Moss, in melancholy accents.

"Miss Amy Moss, you are the affianced wife of a man—a white man—and may not often hear words like those I am about to speak."

"Nay, utter no words," hurriedly exclaimed Amy, as if about to rise and depart.

"Listen, Miss Amy Moss. Why have you tamed my savage energies?—why have you taken from me the taste for rapine and blood?"

Why have you opened my eyes to the beauty of civilized life?—why have you made of me whatever you pleased, though you have been cold, and stern, and haughty; but because I loved you always, because I love you still."

"Hush!" gasped Amy, deeply distressed; "I may not hear these words."

"Amy Moss, you say I am still an Indian. I love you, and yet, James Barton lives."

"I know it," said Amy, with a shudder; "he lives. Good Custaloga, you have indeed learnt much."

"I have learnt much," continued Custaloga, significantly. "I have learnt that Amy Moss—for reasons she only knows—is willing to wed a man she hates."

"How know you?—how dare you say so?" exclaimed Amy, proudly.

"Miss Amy Moss, I say you hate, despise, loathe Barton, and yet you have promised to wed him; and I love you, oh, Amy! more than my life."

"Why talk thus?" said Amy, wildly. "I must marry Barton, and you—you are an Indian!"

"You will never marry James Barton!" exclaimed Custaloga, with a burst of triumph he could not restrain; "and I am not an Indian, though Indian educated."

"I shall never marry James Barton?" said Amy, in accents which she tried to make cold and sarcastic, but which were indeed elated and glad.

"Never!" replied Custaloga, firmly; "you can not marry him."

"Explain yourself."

"I am a white man, Amy Moss," said Custa, gently, forgetting to use the word Miss; "till lately I was ashamed of it, and kept up my color with the sumach stain, with which my Indian mother always dyed my skin; now I am glad of it, and only appear an Indian under the advice of the person who is to tell me all."

"All this is very mysterious, Mr.—I mustn't say plain Custaloga any more, and I can not say but what I think you deceive yourself. When you came to us you were a pure Indian."

"My enemies had wished me to be one, it appears. It seems, as far as hints can tell me, I stood between some one and great wealth, and was put out of the way."

"What!" Amy, clutched his arm with such violence as to bring a cry of pain. "Repeat that."

"Because I stood between some one and great wealth," repeated Custa.

"If this should be true—but no—it is impossible—it can not be," cried the young girl, in a state of frenzy.

"What mean you?" asked Custa, himself now much amazed.

"That I begin to suspect the

truth; but until there is some clue, some idea, that it is so, I dare not breathe my suspicions. Wait, Custa, wait until the hour when the truth shall be revealed unto you; and I vow—listen, Custa, at this terrible hour of peril, when Heaven only hears my words—if what I suspect be true, I will be your wife."

And Amy Moss sprung back in to the hut and lay down.

As Custaloga turned he came face to face with an Indian warrior of gigantic frame, who, so pitchy was the darkness, did not see him until he was actually touching him. The warrior started back, and then gazed curiously at Custa, as if suspecting him a moment, and then was apparently reassured.

"Are they all inside?" he said in a low tone.

Custaloga made one bound, and ere the other could utter a cry, knocked him down with his tomahawk, and killed him without mercy on the spot.

Then the crowing of a cock arose from the hut, a plain, unmistakable crowing, that might have deceived a farm-yard servant.

No reply came from either right or left, or from the rear of the hut. Custaloga gave a second cry, this time much louder, and then hurried round to the back of the log, where he found Ezram Cook fast asleep.

"Up!" he said, shaking him violently; "up! the Indians are on us."

"Ph? What, where?" exclaimed Ezram anxiously.

"Hush! stand by for a signal. Do not move," said Custaloga.

And he glided away back to the hut, and fell on his face on the ground. He now looked over the clearing in every direction, and presently distinctly saw a line of Indians coming straight toward the hut, treading one behind the other with extreme caution.

Custaloga fired, and giving a shout that woke the echoes of the trees, bounded inside the hut, pulled down the door across the doorway, flung a beam of wood to support it, and then his ax and knife ready, began to load, hurriedly begging Amy to lie close and to still the child's cries. Three cracks of the rifle from three different quarters followed a desultory fire from the Indians, and then Cook, Harvey and Harrod came bounding to cover. Custaloga quietly took up a post at a chink, and examined as far as he could the state of affairs without.

The Indians were so startled at the multiplicity of quarters whence the firing came, and apparently so amazed at the number of persons who occupied the place, that they had at once retreated to prepare some other mode of attack; and thus left the fugitives a few moments' peace. The hut was in total darkness, not a glimpse of light could now be shown with safety. Harrod and Cook stood, one on each side of the door, their guns and axes ready, while Harvey crept round to the side of Custa.

"Custa," said he in a low voice, "this is about the worst fix of all. We must make up our minds to die this bout."

"Then we must die," replied Custa, coldly; "we must fight until the last. But for her and the child we might fight our way out—it can not be thought of now. Look!" he continued, turning to Harrod and Cook, "close by the charred stump is a black man, who wasn't there a minute ago."

The rifle of the Silent Hunter and of Cook spoke at the same time; the man fell forward, and then came a series of yells from the forest, which proclaimed the force of the Indians. Custaloga was quiet for a moment. He appeared to be thinking deeply. Suddenly he made a sign to all his companions, and drew them into a corner.

"There is a gentle one and a child in the hut," he said in a low voice; "four men might hold behind the door for a week; but a stray ball might kill the daughter of Judge Moss, and Custaloga could never see the father's face again."

"Well, what is to be done?" asked Harvey, in an anxious tone.

"The bank is steep, but the water is shallow—the gentle one and the child must go down into the Haunted Pool, while three hold the hut."

"But how on airth ayre they to git down?" said Ezram Cook, rather quickly.

"The cord of the bucket is good—Custa has tried it," replied Custa.

"By the ringtailed roarer of Kentucky, that's good," said Ezram. "I'm for absquatulating at once—I don't mind a scrimmage now and then; it jist blows the dust off; but, Goram Shakes! it don't do every day in the week."

Custaloga made no reply, but turned to the corner of the hut where lay Amy and the child, and exchanged a few words with our heroine.

"Any thing that you propose I will go through," said Amy, quietly.

Custaloga, assisted by Harvey, examined carefully the strength of an old chair which had been left in the hut, from the fact that after the massacre of the owners no Indians had ever visited the place. It was found to be solid.

"Now then!" roared Ezram Cook, "give it to the sanguinereous heathens—blaze away!"

A party of Indians had made a rush, and, nothing daunted by the fire of two guns, had succeeded in reaching to within a few yards of the door, which fortunately was barricaded. The two Americans stood ready; the Shawnees came whooping and yelling on, and dashed up to the door. They were met by the cool fire of the two others. The besieging party, meeting once more a resistance which promised to cost them dear, retreated, and began a desultory fire from the trees and bushes which surrounded the clearing, an attack which became every minute more perilous, as the darkness became less, and the clouds flew from the horizon as the storm abated.

Custa now announced that the time was come to make the dangerous experiment he had proposed, as, if left much longer, it would be light, and the weakness of the fugitives be betrayed.

All prepared to act their part in the undertaking, Custa quietly removed some planks at the back of the hut, and passed out into the open air, standing alone on the little platform behind the house. The rope, which had hung to the crook because of its utility in drawing water, was quickly passed through his hand, and examined in every part. Then he fastened it to the chair by thongs and bits of twine, heedless of the crash of rifles and all the shouting and screaming of the Indians. He then, calling Harvey to his side, proceeded to execute the more important part of his duty.

A log, which had once formed part of the wall of the hut, was quietly lifted over a hole indented in the steep bank. This hole was a cave about six feet inward, and was formed by earth having given way between two rocks, which, though separated by this opening, were joined a little further in. Amy and the child were now brought out and seated in the chair, to which they were tied in such a way that the girl could untie the thongs herself when at the bottom.

"As soon as you touch the rocks below," said Custaloga, in a hushed, anxious whisper, "untie yourself, and step back under the rock. As you value your life, not an inch forward! In front there is a gulf of twenty feet of water."

Harrod and Cook were now summoned to hold the end of the rope, while Custaloga and Harvey passed the chair over the log. This they did very quietly, the child being submissive and still from sheer terror.

"Lower away," said Harvey. "Defend the hut!" shouted Ezram Cook, loosening his hold of the rope so suddenly, that, but for Custa, it must have jerked from Harrod's hand. The Wyandot dashed at the cord, flung himself on the ground, his feet against the

log, and held on—not, however, before the chair had fallen two or three feet with a velocity which extorted a shriek from Amy, and a wild cry from the child.

Then Custaloga heard, after two or three shots from the rifles of the Indians, a fearful chorus of cries, howling, curses, and pain, inside the hut. The three men were engaged in a grappling combat with a number of the enemy. But he lowered the chair quietly, though not without extreme difficulty, the weight being very great.

Presently the cord hung loose. Quick as lightning he darted to his feet, fastened the rope, and sprung to the hole he himself had made. The four rifles of the party were standing against the wall on the inside. Custa drew them to his side with extreme rapidity, listening all the while to detect the result of the fierce struggle within. He could hear nothing but stamping, rolling, hard breathing, and such cries as come from men in the last terrible struggle for life; but on the other side he distinctly saw a group of Indians, who appeared unwilling to enter the hut, which was already more than occupied by the combatants, and who could scarcely have been told from one another in the darkness.

By a desperate effort Custa raised two rifles, one in each hand, and fired. The echoes had scarcely died away when, peering again across, he saw that the group had disappeared. He fired, however, two more guns, and then, in the clear, ringing voice of an American backwoodsman, began shouting to supposed companions to come on.

Then he saw, while loading, one figure dart through the open door and fly, and next instant his three companions were near him, clutching their own rifles. The diversion made by Custaloga had, it appeared, alone saved Harvey, who was in the clutches of an Indian even more powerful than himself, but who fled at the sound of the guns, believing the whole force of the whites to be down upon them.

"Go," said Custaloga, pointing to the rope, which he had secured.

Harrod nodded, went up to the log, lowered himself with his hands, and slid down without a word. Cook did the same, and then, after a little hesitation, Harvey.

Custaloga remained alone on the platform, awaiting the signal from below, which, however, was speedily given. Stepping forward—he had sent his rifle down with Harvey—the young Wyandot was about to descend, when he saw a grim warrior stalk round the back of the hut—one who had cast himself on the ground when the volley had been fired, and who now, hearing all quiet, came peering round to discover the true state of affairs. He saw Custaloga, and would have retreated; but he, thinking his secret betrayed, darted to encounter the Indian, who, however, fled, but not before he had noted the other's purposed mode of escape.

Quick as thought, Custa darted into the hut, raked up the embers, drew some out on a piece of wood, placed them on the rope, after giving it a slight cut with his ax, and then, after fanning the embers, rushed himself to escape.

Down he went, with a rapidity that surprised those below—only, it appeared, just in time; for in another minute, the rope came down after him, to the great surprise of his companions, to whom, without another word of explanation, he addressed himself:

"Quick! they know the ford. Harrod, carry your child—follow me. Miss Amy Moss, your hand—let no man speak!"

On the young man went, leading Amy by the hand, keeping close under the bank, at the summit of which he could distinctly hear the Indians conversing. They were ascending the stream, but from the peculiar formation of the cliff, they could not see those below. At the end of a hundred yards Custaloga halted.

The stream was here wide and placid. It ran swiftly by, as if hurrying to sink in the deep pool below, at the end of a descent, down which the water ran with extreme velocity. The opposite bank was low and skirted by trees, which were clearly defined against a sky becoming lighter and clearer every moment.

"Cross," said Custaloga, in a low tone, "and when under cover, fire."

They all obeyed, darting through the water with a rapidity that raised it in clouds of spray behind them. A loud yell from the Indians announced that they were discovered, and then the whole body congregated above where Custaloga stood, discussing how they could follow the fugitives.

There was a sound of whizzing bullets, followed by the crack of rifles, and there was a shriek of alarm or pain, and all in a minute Custaloga bounded for the shore. He reached it, flew to cover, placed Amy fainting on the bank, and sank at her feet lifeless. His alarmed companions surrounded him, and saw that he was wounded in the shoulder. But this did not account for his state of syncope, which indeed was caused by the terrible exertions he had made, and the mingled emotions of joy, terror, and dread he had felt relative to her who so wildly clung to him for preservation.

"Where am I?" said Amy, rising suddenly—and then she saw the lifeless body of the young Wyandot before her. "Is he, then, dead? No! no! it can not be true."

She knelt by his side, and pushing away the others, raised his head gently, and just as she placed it on her knee, the young man drew a long breath and opened his eyes.

His look of wonder and delight, his glance of gratitude and pleasure, brought the rich blood mantling to his cheek, and by sympathy made Amy blush as she recollected the frantic tone of her exclamations when she thought him dead. She gently assisted him to rise, and turned to the child to hide the excess of her emotion, which she the better concealed that the child had to be hushed. A few minutes sufficed to restore Custaloga, to bind up his wounds, and to make him as active as ever.

"We must go," he said, quickly; "the hungry wolves are on our trail—they thirst for our blood."

"If we only had the horses," replied Harvey, "it might be done. But to my judgment, for Miss Amy to reach the Moss without rest isn't possible."

"It must be," said Custaloga, fiercely; "we must carry her, but it must be done."

And he led the way, taking the hand of the young girl, who at once without a word, prepared to follow. The object Custaloga had in view was to strike the Scioto at a place where he had a small bark canoe concealed, and this before the daylight became so bright that all hope of their being undiscovered would be out of the question. To hide was impossible, with a hungry crew of Indians in their rear. For the first time in his life Custaloga felt the influence of despair upon him. He started at every bush, and he listened as if he expected every minute to hear the yelling of the Indians behind them.

But they advanced on their way for some time without interruption, passed the first ford, and then, pushing for the second, reached it just as the day dawned, revealing the wan, haggard and anxious faces of the whole party. Custaloga at once signified his intention to halt. One glance at Amy had been enough. It was clear that for some time she had been crawling rather than walking, while the young Wyandot himself was very nearly exhausted.

In sight of the ford they stationed themselves amid a collection of bushes, and all lay down after taking a deep draught of water, which was most welcome and refreshing. Amy was indeed worn, for scarcely had she laid down on a pile of

green grass and leaves ere she was sound asleep. The men all imitated her example, clutching their rifles, and sleeping with one ear on the ground, so as to catch the faintest sound.

But none came for a little while to break the stillness of the scene. Indeed, the whole party, Amy excepted, were up, and Harvey was fishing in the stream, when Custaloga gave, in a low tone, the croak of the raven. Harvey fell flat on his face, and Harrod and Cook, the latter muttering imprecations between his teeth, clutched their rifles, on which, with their cunning and perseverance, all depended. Again came the warning croak of the old bird, as Harvey crawled upon hands and knees to rejoin his companion.

"What is it, Custa?" he said, gravely, while his eyes fell with tender interest on the sleeping form of Amy.

"The Indians," replied Custa, in low, sad accents, almost of despair, the natural effect of his own weakness and exhaustion.

"Then, Custa," said Harvey sadly, "Amy must fly with Ezram Cook, and we three must die here to save her—it is the only hope."

"My brother," exclaimed Custa, clutching his hand, "you are right."

The heart of the artist bounded within him at these words. There was something so strange in the sensation of being called "my brother," that he could scarce think for an instant of anything else.

Custaloga was all unconscious of the feelings awakened by his words, and quietly roused Amy, whom he told to go forward with the peddler, while they waited to see if any enemies came in sight. This was said with so much unconcern that the young girl readily accompanied the merchant, who, however, was rather unwilling to abandon his friends.

"Cross at the Devil's Gully," said Custa, impatiently. "Wait a quarter of an hour. If we come not, fly, and make the best of your way to the Block."

Ezram Cook bowed his head and went, fully aware of the importance of his charge, and impressed in a most striking manner, with the devotion and self-sacrifice of the three young woodmen; for Custaloga, Harvey, and Harrod seemed on the present occasion, actuated by one thought, guided by one mind.

Scarcely had Amy disappeared when the band of Indians came in sight. They were about ten in number, and walked in Indian file on the opposite side of the stream. But both by their signs and their words it was clear that there were at least as many on the side which was occupied by the fugitives. To retreat was impossible.

"Pass me your horn," said Custaloga, as an Indian appeared close at hand.

"I haven't a charge left," replied Harvey, sadly; "the game's up."

"Let us hide our guns," continued the Wyandot, quickly, "and then give up quietly."

Harvey and Harrod both nodded. To run without a gun-load was useless. To surrender might perhaps save their lives; at all events, it gained them time.

Custaloga then advanced into the open clearing, followed by Harvey and Harrod, and waved his hand to the Indians in token of cessation of hostilities. With a cry of delight that shook the air, the wild troop of Shawnees bounded up, and the three young men were prisoners. The Indians were exceedingly fierce in mien; they had lost many of their companions, while their surprise at the exact character of their prisoners was prodigious.

The Indians gave a yell of pleasure, and so great was their delight at having captured the man whom they knew by report to have vowed to avenge the death of his wife, a hundred fold, that all other thoughts were crushed in their bosoms. A brief conference was held, and at its termination, the three unfortunate young men heard that, to prevent any accident,

and to make sure of the destruction of three such enemies, their death by the fire had been resolved on.

Three saplings close at hand were rapidly cleared of their boughs, and to these, without a moment's delay, the three victims were tied. Then a large heap of brush and wood was piled round them, and every preparation made to fire it. The Indians seemed aware that they had no time to lose, for they spared their prisoners many of those preliminary tortures which usually precede the last agony of death.

At that instant something seemed to dart from the wood, which instantly took the form of Amy Moss, who, jumping amid the startled savages, dashed the burning wood about the ground and scattered the flames ere the savages could interfere.

"Wretches!" cried Amy, standing boldly before the whole tribe, "They had your wives and little ones in their power, and they harmed not one—not even he whose wife and child you have slain. Why do you murder them?"

"War," said the chief, courteously, "is not the affair of women. Let my sister stand on one side—she is welcome. There is a wigwam ready for her at Chillicothe. My young men will light the fire again."

"Wretches, monsters!" shrieked Amy, "you shall not do it—nay, I will be heard. They are my friends, my brothers. Let me go—have mercy, or you shall yourselves ask it in vain."

At that instant a loud hurrah, such as only comes from American throats, was heard behind, then the heavy tramp of near footsteps, and then as Amy fell back upon the pile of wood, a volley of rifles that proclaimed a powerful rescue. Away flew the amazed and startled Indians to cover, and then out burst from the forest Charles, William Harrod, and with a numerous body of dependents of the Block, Ragg, known in this worthy company as Tobias.

To cut the three prisoners loose, to provide them with ammunition, was the work of a minute. There was no time to be lost. The enemy were quite double their number, but the weight of metal and skill was on the side of the white men. Hurriedly bidding Amy lie close to the pile, the whole party darted in pursuit, even Ragg obeying the summons, and quite exhilarated by having a brush with the redskins.

Amy sunk upon her knees and prayed. In such a state of things it was all she could do.

The battle was fought with all the fury of rage and despair. The white men were burning to avenge the massacre of Crow's Nest and Big Bottom, and all the other terrible scenes which had lately engendered feelings never to be eradicated; while the Indians, weakened, dispirited, and demoralized, fought with the sullen valor of despair. They began by retreating, and the sound of the rifles proved that the whites were pressing them hard.

Gradually the sound became quite distant, and Amy began to be alarmed at her solitary position, when a rushing was heard in the bushes, and a young Indian, quite unarmed, appeared, running for his life.

"Stop thief!" roared a hoarse voice behind, and then Ragg came in sight, puffing and blowing after a long chase, having taken a wounded warrior by surprise, and forced him to run to save his life.

"Spare him," said Amy Moss, rising before Ragg; "he is unarmed and helpless."

The Indian halted, laid his hand upon his heart, and before the valiant rag-dealer had recovered his surprise, disappeared in the wood.

A loud hurrah proclaimed the return of the victorious party, and a litter was now made, on which Amy was placed; and thus, under an escort that was mighty indeed for those woods, Amy was taken toward the home of her father,

Custaloga now marching proudly, though with weary steps, beside her, in conversation with Charles. The child was near her, but the Silent Hunter was nowhere to be seen. The moment he saw his little one in safety, he dropped behind, and began following the trail of the retreating Indians. He had, however, promised Custa, by signs, to appear at the Block next day.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A RIFT OF LIGHT.

MEANWHILE the judge and his young daughter Jane were in a state of painful and deep suspense.

"Oh that I had never come up to the woods!" at last said the judge. "It is all my own fault. In the towns I was safe with my little ones, at all events. Dear girl, who knows, at this moment you may be my only one?"

"Father," said Jane, solemnly, "you have taught us in all times of trouble and sorrow to put trust in Him—He will not desert us!"

"His will be done!" murmured the judge, bowing his head.

"Hark!" continued Jane, starting to her feet. "I hear the sound of horses galloping!"

"Ah!"

"'Tis close by—there on the bank!" she cried; and then she added, in an accent of considerable disappointment, "the squire and a stranger."

"They may have news," said the judge, rousing himself.

The ferry-boat was already moving across, the negroes having heard the sound some little time before, and in a few minutes Squire Barton and the stranger were being sculled across, their horses swimming behind.

The judge advanced and welcomed the squire, who introduced the stranger as an English traveler, who, despite the disturbed state of the country, was wandering about the woods in search of scenery and sport. He was a man of much polish of manner and elegant in appearance. He gave his name as Mr. Gregg, but his real name was Sir Charles Carstone, Baronet. He was on his way to Frog's Hole, when he met with the squire, and being wearied, had gladly accepted the offer of a meal and rest at the Canebrake-block.

"Have you any news," said the judge, after the ceremony of introduction had been gone through—"news that may relieve the anxiety of an anxious father?"

"Judge," replied Barton, who was very pale, haggard, and careworn, "there is news, and not bad news. Amy Moss is safe. All the Indians want is a heavy ransom, and that I have agreed to pay. Tecumseh wants to keep her as a hostage—I think the accursed red-skin loves her; but the tribe will be unable to resist the temptation I have held out to them in the shape of whisky, tobacco, beads, blankets, knives, and so on."

"Heaven reward you, Barton!" said the judge; "but I believe that Custaloga is trying to rescue her without ransom. Charles is out to aid him."

"Any act of folly will spoil all," replied Barton, who really had no intention that Amy should ever return to the Block except as his wife; "the Indians are exasperated at a series of murders committed by Harrod."

"Murders, squire!" exclaimed the judge; "did they spare his wife and child?"

"I am not blaming Harrod—for my part I do not care how soon the whole brood of Indians be exterminated; but all I mean is, that if violence be attempted while I am treating, all will be spoilt."

"Enter," said the judge, "enter, and you can tell me more of this ransom. How is it to be conveyed to the Indians?"

"That notorious rascal and thief, Simon Girty," replied the squire, "has taken the thing in hand. He asks but a tenth part of the spoil, the woman, and he will arrange it."

At this instant there came a joyous shout, a cry of triumph from the skirts of the clearing on their side of the river, which made the judge and Jane clasp their hands, the squire turn pale, and all in the Block to leap to the gate, which flew open and gave exit to the whole of the inhabitants. They understood all at a glance. At the head of the procession was a litter, beside which were Custaloga, Harvey, and Charles, all waving their arms in token of success. There was not a step of the procession to warrant one feeling of dread.

In another minute Amy had bounded from the conveyance they had made for her, to meet Jane half-way; and in another minute more, the two fond sisters were in each other's arms, while the delighted father stood shaking hands with Custaloga and Harvey, one on each side, as if they had been his own children, and not one a poor Wyandot, the other an artist who knew not even his parents.

"You have kept your words," he said, fervently, "you have kept your words, like brave and good young men, and Judge Moss is your friend forever. Ask, and you shall have. There is nothing in my power to give which you may not tell me you wish."

The two young men made no verbal reply, but their looks testified their pride and satisfaction.

"My father," cried Amy, who had been soothing her sobbing sister, "do not think I am unmindful of you. But this poor silly thing is so overcome, I can not leave her. Thanks to our brave friends, however, we are home and once more all together."

And moving Jane gently from her rapt embrace, she turned to her father.

"They haven't done you much harm, my beautiful child," said the judge; "a little thinner and somewhat paler you are, but please God that will soon be untrue. Come, my child."

And the judge, with a light and proud step, drew Amy's arm within his own and reentered the Block, amid the cheers of all the garrison, one of the most lusty of whom was Cornelius Ragg, who requested to be taken to the kitchen, there to recruit the inner man after the great fatigues of his successful campaign, and prepare for another which he had very much at heart.

The whole party—the judge, Custaloga, Harvey, Charles, Ezram Cook, the squire, and Sir Charles, who had kept in the background since his eye had caught sight of the remarkable features of Cornelius Ragg—now assembled in the breakfast-room, where Amy, looking all the better for a change of raiment, with Jane, soon joined them, the child having been put to bed.

For many a day there had not been so smiling a group assembled at that hospitable table. The judge sat with one daughter on each side, and Custaloga and Harvey next to them, an arrangement that brought a frown to the face of Squire Barton. He, however, controlled himself, and congratulated Amy on the fortunate deliverance she had experienced, with a warmth of manner which was very significant.

Amy shuddered imperceptibly.

"I fancy, judge," said he, in continuation, with a forced laugh, "I fancy I must call upon you to keep your promise about Amy."

"Not yet! not yet!" cried Mr. Moss, hurriedly. "No, squire, we all know that you are dear Amy's betrothed. It is no secret, and I will mention it then without reserve; but after these horrid events I can not part with my child."

"I don't mean to-morrow," said the squire; "but soon. I have waited the full three years, judge."

"You have, and my word is my bond—you shall not have the wedding put off too long. But say, Amy, you do not wish to leave your old father just yet?"

Amy leaned on her father's shoulder to hide her face. But there was no maiden blush there, none of those coy looks which

usually exist where there is love in a young girl. Custaloga saw her look. It was one of horror.

"I think Amy promised me to-morrow fortnight," said Barton, pointedly.

"Did you, Amy?" asked the judge, in an anxious tone.

"I did," replied Amy, firmly, but coldly, at the same time raising her head.

Suddenly a voice was raised—a voice that seemed strange to most present, so changed were its accents.

"Judge Moss," said Custaloga, gravely, dropping once for all every sign of Indian manner, "you said that Harvey and I should never ask you any thing in vain!"

There was no reply for an instant. "You heard my question, judge?" said Custaloga, who mistook the motive of his silence.

"I did, my son; but there was that in your voice that amazed and startled me. It was a voice I have heard before—a voice as of an old friend. Alas! that can not be; he is dead long since, and has left none behind. But, Custaloga, I do remember my promise!"

"Then, judge, as your word is given before Heaven, I adjure you not to allow the marriage of your daughter for five weeks."

"Why?" said the judge, in blank amazement.

"Judge," replied Custaloga, with a firmness that appeared to partake of prophetic knowledge, "because I hope before then to be able to ask the hand of Amy Moss myself—Amy Moss, whom I love with all my heart and soul!"

"Custa," cried Amy, with flashing eyes, "you forget yourself!"

"My friend," said the judge, kindly, "you know this can not be."

"If you wait the five weeks, it will be; because, when that time is past, Miss Amy Moss will refuse to marry James Barton, as she would refuse to marry Simon Girty."

"Villain, what mean you?" cried Barton, choked with rage; "what change will five weeks bring about?"

"What five weeks will bring about I know not," said Custa; "but this I know, that I have been told by one on whom I rely, that that time will bring a mighty change. I have sworn to reveal nothing; but I have leave to say," exclaimed Custa, looking Barton full in the face, "though I do not understand the meaning, that, on the 27th of June next, Reginald Morton will be twenty-one years of age!"

"You lie!" roared Barton, clutching Custa by the throat; "you lie, fiend in human shape! Reginald Morton is dead!"

Custaloga, without noticing the tremendous effect of his words on all present, pushed the squire back, who leaned against the wall with glaring eyeballs and hot, flushed face. He gazed at Custaloga for a few minutes in silence, as if overwhelmed.

"I am ready to fulfill my contract," said Amy; and Barton, turning to her with a look of gratitude, respect, and thankfulness, which quite removed for an instant all trace of evil expression from his face, said: "My whole life will be too little to repay the debt I have incurred. I knew your promise was sacred."

"A solemn promise, James Barton," replied Amy, gently, "must always be kept."

"Yes, it must," exclaimed the judge, much relieved by the suggestion thus, it seemed, accidentally thrown out to him. "I have made a promise to Custaloga, and that promise shall be kept. Amy Moss can not be married thus in a hurry, and five weeks is not a very long time to wait."

The squire at once rose and left the room. He was heard outside bidding the negroes call him at daybreak and saddle his horse. He then entered his room and slammed the door violently.

"Custaloga," said the judge, as soon as Barton was out of sight,

"have you any certainty of proving all this?"

"I wish I were as sure as I am of Miss Amy Moss's cold indifference to me," began the Wyandot.

"I am the affianced wife of James Barton," said Amy, with much emotion.

"You will never marry him," continued Custa, earnestly.

"If before the 27th of June you release me from my vow, a vow I can never break of my own free will," said Amy, bending her eyes on the ground in great confusion, "then will I become the wife of Reginald Morton, if he desires it."

"Of Reginald Morton!" exclaimed Custa, wildly; "why of Reginald Morton?"

"I will tell you on the 27th of June," said Amy, in a low tone.

"Custaloga," said the judge, pressing his hand, while all the others listened in amazement, "you have not answered my question."

"One who has reason to be grateful to me for saving her from the brutal violence of that man, told me, not long ago, that she would tell me things of him, on the 27th of June, which would annihilate all hope of his ever becoming the husband of Amy Moss. She said that right should be done, and Reginald Morton restored to the home of his father."

"Then," said the judge, solemnly, "if indeed Reginald Morton be alive, thou art the man. Your Indian speech has kept my eyes veiled; but just now I knew your voice, the voice of your dead, murdered father!"

"I Reginald Morton!" exclaimed Custa.

"But for your dusky hue I should swear to the likeness," said the judge.

"My dusky hue is all false," replied the other. "But my early Indian education has made me ashamed of my true color. I have always used the dye given me by an Indian woman."

"Wash it off," said the judge; "be quick—I would be sure."

Custaloga, while all gazed at him with breathless excitement, rose and went away. He was not long absent, and when he returned, he was dressed in the costume of an American gentleman.

"As like my old friend Morton as a twin brother!" cried the judge.

Amy Moss was here so overwhelmed by her emotion that she retired with Jane, alleging her late fatigue as an excuse.

The stranger took advantage of this move to rise also, to take his departure, after receiving full explanation as to the route he was to follow to reach the Frog's Hole, with a hint from the peddler to mind how he acted there, as the owner was a great rascal.

"I only escaped with my whole skin, stranger, by means of a splendid girl called Kate. Ralph Regin meant to cut my throat; there ain't no two ways about that."

A long and interesting conversation took place between those who remained, and the lights and shadows of the squire's character were discussed with considerable energy.

"There was something," said Custaloga, in a low, musing tone; "there was something in the woman's look to bear out the hope you give me, judge."

"Said she nothing of the other child?" asked Dick Harvey, in a husky tone, the tears standing in his eyes.

"Why ask you?" said the judge. "Because I too am an orphan and never knew my parents," cried the young man. "Let me tell my story."

The following is a brief outline of his story:—

Mrs. Girty lived in a small cottage outside the town of Boston, where the first thing Harvey could remember was being placed at school by a lawyer named Warton, who supplied his mother, as he used to call her, with money. This lawyer, who was reported to be a good man, used to come down to the cottage and indulge in what he used to think very wearisome lectures to Mrs. Girty about his bring-

ing up, and in very strong observations about Simon, who was only not hung because he was not caught. She used to say that perhaps he was not so bad as people said, because he always sent her money every now and then to support her and the poor boy.

"That boy," would the lawyer say, "that boy's proof against him. He's got him here for no good. He is not his boy; then whose boy is he?"

"I am sure I do not know," said the old woman; "Simon would never tell me. He only says, 'Be careful of him, he may be a fortune to us.'"

"Rank knavery!" would Warton cry; "but take care of him. Time will show, time will show!"

When Harvey was ten years old he would ramble away from his home for days at a time with a sketch-book, draw animals, houses, scenes, and then come back to study with great diligence. It was soon found that he was passionately fond of drawing, and this art the lawyer directed he should be specially taught.

At fifteen the lad had made such progress that his productions began to strike people with surprise and wonder, and he was eagerly sought to give lessons to others. A desire for a roaming life, however, made him neglectful of this opportunity, and as soon as he was able to procure a gun, he started up into the woods, there to pursue his studies amid the wonders of nature. It was during these expeditions he had visited the Moss, and became the drawing-master of the two girls, and the friend and companion of Custaloga.

"There is a Providence that watches over us," said the judge, solemnly, "which in its good time will explain all. I hope your suspicions are correct—for two more worthy inheritors of my friend's estate I would not seek."

"And I ask no better brothers," said Charles, taking their hands. The judge started.

"Eh, what?" he cried; "another enemy of my peace! Am I to lose both my girls?"

"Please God," said Custa, "if all this be true, you will lose neither of them."

Harvey held down his head in too great confusion to speak.

"Is it true that you too love my daughter?" asked the judge.

"I do," replied Dick, timidly.

"And does she know of it?"

"I believe not," continued Harvey, in earnest accents; "I have never spoken to her on the subject."

"Then there is time to speak of all this. It is late. Let us go to bed."

At daybreak next morning James Barton left by the ferry and galloped off in the direction of Scowl Hall.

An hour later the screams of the attendants on Amy and Jane aroused all the inhabitants of the Block. Hebe had gone into their room to inquire if any thing were wanted, and had found the bed untenanted. The girls had not undressed, it was easy to see, but had fallen asleep while talking, and that outside the bedclothes. There Hebe had indeed found them, when she took them gruel the preceding night. But finding them asleep, she had cast shawls over them and left them.

The rage, fury, and despair of the friends can not be described. Custaloga and Harvey lost their self-possession utterly, and darted away into the wood in various directions, in a few minutes followed by Charles, leaving the bereaved father utterly prostrated by this last blow. A large party soon afterward started to scour the wood, to the great indignation of Corney Ragg, who was impatient to return to the Frog's Hole, the more so as he had suspicions relative to the stranger who had started up there through an unknown Indian country. His determination was, however, soon taken.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A MYSTERY SOLVED.

THERE was, on the banks of the stream nearly facing Scowl Hall, a tree which was quite worthy of being mentioned beside the most celebrated in the natural history of the world. It was an elm, and had spread its boughs right and left, until it had overshadowed a large space of ground, where naught was to be seen but the decaying leaves that formed a new soil beneath its arching shadows, and here and there the sprouting of tiny elms—natural-growing offshoots from the forest tree.

It was scarcely daybreak after the atrocious outrage had been committed at the Moss, when Custaloga—for by this name we must still call him, until he obtains another—emerged from the forest, and shaking off the dew, stood within the shadow of the tree, gazing sternly at the house where he knew Squire Barton dwelt. In his own mind, he had come to the conclusion that Barton was the author of the abduction of the sisters, and this from a variety of reasons.

Custaloga was convinced that the passion of the squire was not returned—that, indeed, Amy Moss rather hated than loved him.

He was equally well aware that from some mysterious reason, which to him was inexplicable, she felt herself bound to fulfill her promise to marry him.

He was equally well aware that the squire felt his prey escaping from his grasp, and would therefore be likely to use measures which were not strictly within the bounds of honor to insure his marriage.

Therefore, unwilling to make his injurious suspicions known, he had come of his own accord to prow round Scowl Hall alone, in the hope of discovering how the squire had contrived his criminal abduction.

He was too well acquainted with the character of the place, not to be aware that there might be danger in his advancing upon the house in too great a hurry. The men who formed the body-guard and retainers of the squire were notorious in the whole country for villainy. The young man, therefore, determined to use all the caution of his acquired habits, which seemed to come to him instinctively, and by second nature.

He knew that there was a ford across the stream just at the tree under which he stood, some strange feeling having often brought him to that place to gaze at the house with eyes of curiosity and longing.

The part of the mansion toward the river was clearly visible from the place where he stood. There were four windows on the two upper floors, but the basement story, which was quite on a level with the water, had a kind of grating instead of a window, overgrown thickly with ivy and other parasitical plants. In front of this was a garden tended with exceeding care, which was surrounded by a kind of rude stockade.

Two large dogs roamed about this garden, over which in general one of the wild band of retainers mounted guard.

There was no one there on the present occasion.

Custaloga peered round and listened attentively; all lay still as if

"The rude ax, with heaved stroke,
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt."

He was surprised that even from the outhouses on the other side there should be no sound of voices. There were on the estate, a large colony of blacks and overseers and servants, but they appeared either not yet risen, or departed at early dawn to their labors.

He determined at all risks to cross the river. The stillness and quiet of the place made him uneasy. He could not make it out, he could not understand it. Why were there no busy servants about? Why could nobody be heard moving about the house? He was not aware that it was strictly forbidden

to everybody connected with Scowl Hall ever to come round to that side of the house.

At this instant he heard behind him in the distance, a little to his right, a cracking in the bushes, a tramping as of one dashing along in a hurried and angry way; and then instantly he heard another sound to his left of the same kind. He smiled a grim smile, for he almost guessed who in a few minutes were to be the companions of his solitude.

He, however, was in no way careless or neglectful of those precautions which had become to him a second nature. He drew back into the deep shadow of the tree, and gave, with tolerable certainty that his signal would be understood, the low hoot of the owl. His keenest senses could not detect for a moment the sound of human footsteps. But then the noise was heard once more, and they came dashing along, and in another minute two men came from the cover of the wood.

"Custaloga!" they both cried with one voice.

"Harvey! Bennett!" said he, advancing to meet them.

The three young men grasped each other's hands with energy, and for a moment in silence. They gazed at one another with a glance of peculiar meaning.

"Custaloga! Harvey!" suddenly said Bennett, who, as a retainer of the Moss House, took upon himself to represent the family, "speak to me; why have you come here?"

"To find Amy Moss," replied Custaloga, quietly.

"To find Amy Moss!" repeated Richard Harvey, emphatically.

"My friends, I came here, also, to look for my master's daughter—I thank you—three will have more chance than one. But tell me why you came here for her?"

"Bennett," said Custaloga, gravely, "there are instincts of the human heart which never deceive us. I have long suspected that the squire has been the cause of all the misfortunes of your house. It must have been he who allowed the Alligator and the negro to escape—it is he who has abducted Amy."

"But why?"

"Why!—have I not said she shall never marry him?"

"But she is his affianced wife."

"She is—but could he induce her to marry him by the use of force or terror, he would do so. There is a mystery behind that man, which I long to penetrate."

"Then let us on," said Bennett, impetuously; "I would huri him to the earth myself. He has, I fear, been a hollow traitor to us all."

Clutching their rifles, without further speech, the three young men entered the stream, following the ford and making straight toward the house. In a few minutes they stood upon the opposite bank, near the garden of the house already alluded to. Again they listened, and they fancied they heard low murmuring voices.

"Voices of women," said Bennett. "Follow me."

"Hush!" replied Custaloga, clutching his arm to restrain his impetuosity. "Be slow."

And he glided round under the house, scarcely seeming to touch the ground until he reached the front door. He placed his hand upon the latch. It was unfastened.

"It is unfastened!" he said with a slight shiver; "she is not here."

"Let us search," replied Harvey. "I heard women's voices."

They raised the latch, opened the door; not a soul was stirring in the outhouses, which were at some considerable distance from the mansion, though the watchdogs barked violently from every part of the building.

Before them was a long passage from which many doors opened. They tried each as they passed. The rooms were all richly and even elegantly furnished, though slightly tarnished; but in no room did they find a living soul. They were at the end of the passage and about to ascend the stairs scarcely

noticing a last door, which was concealed in the shadow, when they distinctly heard several voices in altercation. They listened a moment, and then discovered the door which had escaped their first examination. They opened it rapidly. It was the private room of Squire Barton. The shutters were closed, and most of the room was in obscurity; but what astounded them all was, that light streamed up from a hole in the floor, and from that hole came voices.

There were the chuckling sound of a negress, the angry tones of a white woman, and the feeble moaning as it were of a child.

They looked at each other as if for an explanation, and then treading cautiously on the heavily-carpeted floor, they moved round the trap-door and looked down.

That morning, a little before the arrival of Custaloga, Phoebe—the handsome negress already alluded to—had risen from her bed, and come down, without awaking any of the attendants who usually ministered to her wants and caprices. She had gone to the kitchen, which was near the front of the house, and there cut some slices of bread and meat and filled a jug with water. All this she had placed upon a tray, and then had advanced to the private cabinet of the squire, which she opened with a key that hung from her girdle.

As if familiar by long use with the place, she had laid down the platter of meat and bread, and the lantern which she also bore, and had raised the trap-door formerly mentioned in the early part of this narrative. Then with a grin on her face she had listened, but hearing no sound, had quietly descended the stairs that led into the cellars.

They were not very extensive, and toward the river were not under ground, the land having suddenly sloped down and been taken advantage of to make a garden, and what had been intended for a strong-room, where valuables could be confined and concealed. The door of this room the negress slowly opened and peered in.

It was a long, low room, with a barred window, which was deeply overshadowed with ivy and other plants, and about a yard of it near the door was divided from the rest by means of strong wooden bars, through which not more than a human hand could pass. Within this division Phoebe entered, pushing the door behind her. Then she laid down the platter, opened a wicket, passed it inside, and then rung a bell and waited.

The light came dimly into the room, dimly and gloomily through the bars and through the ivy—shedding but little influence upon the scene. It was a sight to explain all the squire's fears and anxieties—his pallid brow, his evil manner, his dread of society, his wish to remain forever blocked up in his own castle, where none could reach or interfere with him.

There were two women in that room, or rather cage.

One of them was a pale, delicate young creature, of about five-and-twenty—pale from want of light, which is as needful to the proper nourishment of the human frame as it is to the flower, which droops and dies when excluded from the sun. This young girl had pretty, interesting features, long curling hair, white teeth, gentle eyes half consumed with weeping, and a temper so yielding and lovable and tender, that she had never once complained of the crime of which she was the victim.

There could be no doubt that, despite the vigilance of overseers and white Indians, in the course of time some person must have passed that way and heard her cries, if cries she had uttered. But she uttered none. She kissed the hand that smote her, and prayed day and night for him.

She had a stock of books, chiefly of a devotional character; and having become reconciled to the idea of utter seclusion from the world, she endeavored to think only of another and a better—even

sometimes thanking Heaven that had removed from the temptations of society, her who in the world had been a laughing, giddy, merry-hearted child. She had never been happy. From the first dawn of womanhood she had known sorrow. She had married very young, and had found coldness, neglect, unkindness, and, finally, had been removed out of sight and buried from the world.

And this was the wife of Squire James Barton.

He had seen Amy Moss, and loved her with as much sincerity as belonged to his seared and rugged nature. He was a man of few, if any scruples. He at first, dimly, darkly, somewhere in the deepest recesses of his soul, had dreamed of murder. But he shrunk, appalled, from the suggestion, when, coming home, he gazed upon his young and innocent wife.

He however set afloat the rumor that she was very ill, and then that she was dead, and even had a coffin buried beside the bodies of his mother, her husband and children.

Little did the mother of Helen Jay suspect that her child was immured in a living tomb, that her place might be supplied by another victim. Had but a breath of this suspicion oozed out, not all the dread of Scowl Hall and its gang would have kept the relatives and friends of the Jay family from storming the place.

The female beside this gentle girl was one of very different mold. She stood erect beside the gentle, retiring girl, and gazed at the mulatto with a frown of scorn.

"What want you?" said she, in a quick, sharp voice.

"Yar your break'ast." "Leave it there and go; but again mark my words. Beware! There will be vengeance for all this. Your wretched master has all but run his race."

"No—he bring home nice wife soon—yah! yah! He very fond of white little lady."

Kate took the food through the grating, and Phoebe, angry at the contempt shown her, turned to go.

"My!" was all she could say.

"Give me the keys," said Custaloga sternly; "make haste!"

"Massa Reginald," cried the woman, quite terror-stricken, "sabe me life, and I tell ebbery ting."

"Friends! friends!" cried Kate, clapping her hands.

"Friends indeed," cried Custaloga; "but speak, I beseech you. Who are you? Secure this woman," he added, utterly forgetting his own affairs in his anxiety to free the young women.

"I am the wife of James Barton," replied the gentle being, advancing. "I am his wife—but let no harm be done him; I hope that he may be forgiven by man and Heaven."

"How shall I bear all this?" cried Custa. "Barton married? Then Amy Moss is free—free! free to reject this man who holds mysterious power over her."

The negress here intimated her willingness to explain even this. But Custaloga's first thought was to retreat from the hall before the return of any of the outlying parties. He at once intimated his intention of taking the three women with him, as they were necessary to his plans. Helen hesitated a little, doubtful of her right to leave her husband's house against his will. But Custaloga spoke in such indignant language, and Kate so ably seconded him, that she was forced to yield.

Custaloga supported her trembling weight, Bennett offered his arm to Kate, while Richard Harvey secured Phoebe, who, overcome by terror, and apparently by remorse, offered no resistance, even volunteering to tell everything, and declaring that she had only consented to be the instrument of the squire's crimes from fear of his servants and rymridons, she herself hating and despising him from the bottom of her heart.

They left the house as cautiously as possible, and struck into the

woods by a well-beaten trail. They proceeded a mile without halting. Then Custaloga drew a little off the trail, and proposed, out of consideration for their more delicate companions, that they should breakfast, he having secured materials for this purpose from the hall.

All the party gladly acquiesced in this proposition.

Helen Barton seemed almost helpless. The sudden glare of light, the bustle and activity of life, the sun, the birds in the trees, the waving forest, were all so new and confusing that it was with difficulty she could collect her ideas sufficiently to tell her melancholy tale; which, however, she at last did. The bustle of the outward world, the beauty of creation, the voices of friends, appeared to rouse her somewhat to a sense of her husband's crime toward herself; and yet there was very little of asperity in her tone and manner as she narrated all that she had suffered from him.

The three young men heard the story of her several years' imprisonment with an indignation that knew no bounds, while all felt a thrill of delight at the discovery that Barton was a married man.

"The monstrous villian!" said Bennett, moodily; "and our family made him a companion and friend."

"I never liked him," said Richard Harvey; "never."

"And I have always hated him," cried Custaloga, impetuously.

"No," said Helen, gently; "you must not hate him. He is not a good man, but let us hope—"

"You know not half his crimes, dear lady. Listen to this wretched woman, and then I think you will understand why your hand can never press in forgiveness the hand of the murderer."

"Murderer!" cried Helen, wildly; "no! not a murderer."

"Listen to his accomplice," said Custaloga sternly.

Phoebe, after a few minutes' hesitation, told a story so terrible, so fearful, that all listened to it with horror and amazement, which changed to other feelings as the woman ended her tale.

"If you lose a husband, you find two brothers," said Custaloga, cordially. "But there is one more thing to be done, before we determine our course of action. Now, Phoebe, explain why Amy Moss feels bound to marry Barton, though evidently hating him."

The negress readily acquiesced in this demand, and continued her narrative, which was no less exciting in its nature than the preceding one.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE REASON WHY.

It was about a year before the events recorded in our present narrative, and on a bright May morning, that a young lady in a hunting dress, and mounted on a gallant steed, came galloping through the woods on the upper waters of the Scioto, in company with a gentleman. He, too, was mounted, and rode by her side.

"'Tis a lovely day, Amy," he said, "and lovelier still because you are by my side."

"It is a lovely day," replied Amy, dashing forward to escape his searching looks, "and I am glad that you are happy."

"'Tis now eleven months to the day of our marriage," continued the squire; "a long, long time!"

She dashed on still along the path, cutting the boughs of the trees with her whip.

"A year is soon gone," she replied again, with a laugh that sounded somewhat forced.

He bit his lip.

"A year, may, perhaps, go too soon for some," he said, moodily. "I fear Amy Moss has changed much in a year."

"James, have I ever said a word to indicate any change in my intentions?" asked Amy, turning this time gravely to him.

"Never," replied James Barton; "but I do fear a change in your

affections. You seem glad that there lies this long interval between the present and the future."

"A young girl who is happy and petted at home," continued Amy, again making her horse curvet before him, "is never in a hurry to change her name."

"But you do intend to change it?" said Barton, almost fiercely.

"If you wish it," replied Amy, looking forward at the trees.

"If I wish it!" roared Barton in a state of half frenzy, "if I wish it! So it has come to this. All your promises and gentleness have come to this. You will marry me because you have promised to do so."

"I have promised, and, if it is desired, I will keep my promise," said Amy, coldly.

"What means all this, I ask?" cried Barton, screaming in a passionate tone, unfortunately for himself, that sounded shrill and angry; "who has robbed me of your heart?"

"Mr. Barton, that is an impertinent question," said Amy coldly.

"Impertinent it may be, but I will have it answered."

"Will?"

"Yes, Amy. You have promised to be my wife, and, as I live, you shall be. This strange change in you has unmanned me. I can no longer wait the year. Amy Moss, my house is but four miles distant. It is ready to receive its mistress. In two hours I will find a priest who will unite us."

As he said these words he snatched the bridle of Amy's horse, and darted away along the trail.

Amy lost all command over herself for a moment.

"Coward," she cried, and struck him with her whip.

Barton muttered a deep curse and plunged on.

At this instant other horses' footsteps were heard, and Amy uttered a loud cry.

"Hurrah!" shouted Charles; "is that you, Amy?"

Barton reined in his horse and quietly loosened his rifle from his saddle-bow. His face was livid with passion.

"As surely as he comes, he dies," he said.

"Barton!" said the girl, wildly, "are you an assassin?"

"Promise, then."

"I will be your wife, Barton," said Amy, in a low but distinct tone; "and I will never breathe a word of this interview."

"You swear it?"

"I do," replied Amy, proudly.

"This way," shouted Barton, turning round and responding to the other in a cheerful tone.

In another instant they had joined young Charles Moss, and were riding back toward the Block.

Just as they turned, a man, who had been dogging their steps, came out of the thick bushes and looked after them.

"That air's a goodish secret to git hold on. I guess she'd pay tidy to hayve that told. Well, if he don't mind, I will, by gum."

And the fellow cast his rifle on the hollow of his arm and pursued his way through the forest.

CHAPTER XXX.

MORE DISCOVERIES.

WHEN Harrod said adieu to his companions, he turned back on the track of the Indians with terrible resolves in his mind. The sight of his child, its salvation from the hands of the savages, had slightly moved his soul to softer emotions. But during recent events, while dogging the steps of the Indians, Harrod had found out from the man's own boasting the actual murderer of his wife.

This man he had determined to sacrifice to his revenge.

He traveled many a weary mile without showing sign of fatigue. He had soon found the trail of the Indians who had escaped the combat, and his eye dilated as he marked how they struggled with weariness and from the effect of wounds. He felt himself a match for half a dozen at least.

It was, perhaps, after six hours

of hard walking in the woods, when the tracks became so recent, that he began to use extreme caution in his proceedings. The Indians were, doubtless, not many hundred yards ahead. He had passed a place where they had rested some time, and he there had counted seven marks of seven warriors. This number by no means daunted him, and in a few minutes more he caught a glimpse of the last straggler, a warrior of the band, as he disappeared beneath the arches of the forest up a slight acclivity.

It was now with all the art and caution of a cat that Harrod dogged the weary band, among whom he soon recognized, with a thrill of delight, the murderer of his wife.

His whole frame shook with agony a moment, and then he paused a while to let them go on, fearful that he might otherwise be seen, and his hopes and desires balked.

The Indians, unconscious of the proximity of their stern and unrelenting foe, made beds for the wounded, tended their sores, which they washed and then bound up with leaves and thongs. They then made a fire, and collecting round it, spoke in low accents, and in a kind of chanting tone, of the many disappointments and defeats which had fallen upon their tribe in a short time.

It was only subsequent to the murder of Clara at the Crow's Nest that the terrible vengeance on their tribe, indicted by some audacious and unseen hand, had commenced, and all the members of this party combined to regret the occurrence, looking with sullen and reproachful eyes at the man who had killed Clara with his own hand.

The Indian bowed his head and said nothing. There was none of the ordinary boasting and fire in him now. He vaunted not the terrible deed, but in his heart of hearts regretted it. This in an Indian was unusual, but so was the dire calamity which the act had brought upon his tribe and race. He did not then join in the conversation, but sat apart brooding on the events of the last few days.

Harrod was so near that he heard the speaking of the men, and a strange and novel feeling came over him when he heard these wild and savage creatures regretting the murder of his gentle wife. He almost felt soothed and calmed, but not toward the trembling wretch who sat cowering and silent by the fire.

It had been dark an hour, and the Indians had lain still all that time, ere he moved.

Then he leaned his rifle against the tree, pulled from one of his pockets a long leather thong, drew his knife from the sheath, and stalked out into the open air. He seemed the incarnate spirit of war as he glided along—remorseless, his blood boiling only with rage, his soul dead and cold to every feeling of pity, tenderness, or love, for his fellow-creatures.

There burnt still a few embers of the fire, round which the Indians slept, with their feet inward toward the hot coals, and these embers were the Silent Hunter's guide to lead him like a star to his deed of blood.

Harrod coolly picked out the murderer of his wife. He lay a little apart from the others, in a restless, agitated slumber, as if perplexing and annoying dreams, from which he sought to escape, tormented and worried him. Harrod, with a look which was for the moment like one of the faces which artists love to give to Lucifer, slid to the ground and lay beside his enemy. There had been a slight sign of waking in one of the Indians, and he had noticed it in time.

Harrod scarcely breathed. One false step now was death. Were he discovered, he could scarcely hope to cope with seven Indians, even though two were wounded.

But all was still; the sleepers scarcely moved, the sighing of the

wind and the rustling of the trees above made even their breathing inaudible. Then up rose Harrod once more, and with slow and cautious motions quietly pinioned his wretched prey. The man moved so often in his restless sleep, 'twas matter quite easy for accomplishment. Then he clutched in one hand a handkerchief, and rose. He now acted with the rapidity of thought. He knelt quickly on the Indian's chest, and thrust the ready gag into his mouth. The Indian opened his eyes and gazed wildly at Harrod.

He knew him but too well, and allowed him to act as he pleased.

In another minute he was utterly helpless.

Then Harrod turned and cut off the scalp-lock of the nearest Indian and laid it upon his breast. Satisfied with the bravado, he rose—he who the night before would have killed all seven without remorse—and seizing his huge burden, plunged once more into the forest.

Harrod went quietly round to where his rifle lay, and there he loosened the bands from the Indian's feet and bade him walk before him. The Indian shuddered and hesitated. It was in the direction of the Crow's Nest. Harrod sternly pressed his rifle against his back and cocked it. The Indian bowed his head and advanced.

On they went beneath the formless wild, the wind howling in the darkened air, from slope to slope, up hill, down dale, by quaggy marshes, quenching their thirst occasionally at some fresh fountain by the wayside, but never halting for a moment; until presently the black night began to grow less, there was a gray light in the sky, the leaves of the trees became distinguishable one from another, and then, with a burst of joyous music from myriad throats of birds, morning broke.

Harrod stood and looked out upon the waste before him—the charred and ruined hut, the desolated field, and the grave of her who had been all in life to him. He turned with a withering scowl to the prisoner, and bade him, by a fierce gesture, advance. The Indian bowed his head and went in the direction to which the other pointed.

Under a tree he halted.

Harrod cast his rifle and his knife to the ground, and using his immense strength in a way that seemed to betoken incipient madness he bound the Indian to the tree.

Then he spoke for the first time since the murder of his wife.

"Indian," he said, "murderer, assassin, you stand on the grave of my wife."

"Ugh!" replied the other with a shudder, as he looked down at the mound on which he stood.

"Indian, you are about to die," continued Harrod, brandishing his knife.

The Indian looked proudly and naughtily up. He understood death, and glanced fiercely and savagely at the threatening white man.

"No, Indian, I ain't going to kill you right off—no—perhaps to-morrow, perhaps next day, perhaps in a week," said Harrod, with an accent of hate, rage, and despair quite terrible.

The Indian was cowed by the terrible prospect of waiting for death in that position. He hung his head upon his breast.

Harrod sat down upon the ground.

Presently he closed his eyes, and seemed to sleep. The Indian watched him warily, and then raising his own head, made an attempt to burst his bonds. Harrod was on him in an instant.

"Ah! coward—I expect you want to flit—you ain't gone yet though. But it ain't no use, Indian. You're tied up tight, and you don't escape this fixin'. But you might, and so the best thing I can do is to kill you right off."

"Kill!" said the Indian, coldly, "big pale-face—much talk—squaw."

"Indian!" replied Harrod, grave-

ly, as he, so used to Indian customs, understood the sneer; "have you then a squaw?"

"I have," said the other.

"Ah!" and the white man's eyes glared with redoubled fury. "A squaw—and I reckon you love her."

"She is the light of Moniwah's heart—the mother of his little ones," said the Indian, with some emotion.

"Moniwah!" hissed Harrod close to his ear; "life is very dear."

"A brave is always ready to die," said the warrior, coldly.

"An Indian warrior don't lie—I expect, if he says a thing, it is right up and down, and no mistake."

"Moniwah has no forked tongue—he is called True Heart."

"If I said, 'Go, Moniwah, see your wife and little ones, and come back in three suns to die'—would Moniwah come?" asked Harrod, with a searching look.

"Moniwah would stand at the foot of the tree as the sun touched its top."

"Then I reckon, Indian, we can come to terms," said Harrod, with even greater wildness than ever.

"I listen."

"And you may live if you like," continued the Silent Hunter.

"Ugh—speak!" said the Indian, distrustfully.

"Look ye, Moniwah—you killed my wife and child—now you go back to the camp—bring here your wife and child, and go our ways—then I reckon even justice will be done. I am alone, and you will be alone—we are quits."

"White man dog!" roared the Indian; "kill—no speak!"

"So you won't, to save your life, Indian, give up thy wife and little ones?" said Harrod, moodily.

"No!" replied the Indian, coldly, even scornfully.

"Will ye give up yer squaw?"

"No!" continued Moniwah; "kill—no talk."

"You have five minutes to decide," said Harrod, shaking in every limb, and clutching his knife.

"Kill!" cried the Indian, fiercely; "the Manitou will take care of my wife and little ones."

"Indian!" said Harrod, while the scorching tears came rolling down his manly cheeks, and his whole frame quivered with wild emotion, and his form dilated, and his mien was dignified and sublime; "I never killed a deer when it defended its young. Your love for your wife and child has saved your life. Go! Harrod will kill no man in cold blood again."

So saying, he cut the thongs of the astounded Shawnee, who, however, quite understood the cause of this wonderful change, though he sunk to the earth when no longer held up. Harrod stooped and raised him up. He shook a little, and something of his old rancor leavened his present Christian emotions when he saw Custaloga, Harvey, and Bennett burst the cover and come running up; but he had felt too deeply to be suddenly changed, and he rose to meet them with a faint smile.

He shook them all by the hand, and listened to the story of the abduction of Amy and Jane with his usual silence. He nodded his head, however, when they asked him to join them.

At this moment the Indian rose and made a motion to speak. All turned toward him.

With much emotion, in the figurative language of his race, he related every detail, the events of the night, the terrible resolves of Harrod, and the way in which he had been brought round to change his ideas. All listened with wonder, though the conclusion of the Shawnee's speech scarcely surprised them. He wound up his oration by an offer to pilot them to the place of concealment of Amy and Jane Moss, which offer, however, was not accepted. He named the place, which was quite sufficient, and then the party at once started toward the Frog's Hole.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A BEVY OF ROGUES.

RALPH REGIN was now in a position which few men would have envied. He had within his walls, as a prisoner, a man he had deeply injured, while the person, to secure whom he had acted in this manner, had escaped his grasp. Kate had not reappeared at the Frog's Hole for reasons well known to the reader, though Ralph had been unable to learn any tidings whatever of her. This circumstance, so inexplicable to the man of crime and guilt, acted on his mind with a force which betrayed itself in startled looks, in sullen mien, and continual applications to the bottle. To Martha he was savage and morose, while whatever cheerfulness he displayed, as usual with drunken husbands, was to his boon companions.

At times he determined to release his prisoner, whose presence, after the escape of Ragg, was to a certain extent dangerous; for Ragg would doubtless in the end rouse the indignation of the country. Then he resolved to tell the truth to the merchant, and throw himself on his mercy. But how was he to account for the absence of Kate?

Racked by doubts, tortured by fear, generally overcome by drink, Ralph's whole existence was now extremely wretched.

He stood before his door one morning—his boon companions were within drinking—musing sadly on his past life, regretting much that had been, and looking forward with dismay to the future. His crimes appeared to tread upon his heels with a rapidity and swiftness he had little dreamed of.

Suddenly the sound of a horseman galloping roused him from his lethargy. He raised his head, and at the same moment the new arrival bounded from the cover. It was a man in the dress of one of the better classes of society—a gentleman, in fact, whom Ralph did not know. Instinctively alive to every thing that looked like danger, he was about to retreat, when the other came dashing up to the foot of the stairs.

"Is this the Frog's Hole?" said he, in a loud, imperious tone.

"Well, I guess it is," replied Ralph, shaking in every limb.

The man made no reply, but dismounted, fastened his horse to a rail, and came slowly up the steps.

Ralph stood motionless. His senses seemed about to leave him. That voice, too, was not unknown to him.

"The very man," said the stranger, as he came close. "Hackett, as sure as I live."

"Sir Charles here?" replied the other, hesitating.

"Yes—am I too late?" asked the guilty cousin hurriedly, as he noticed the man's uneasiness and alarm.

"He is in there, and she is gone."

"In there?" cried Sir Charles, hurriedly, his face becoming livid in its pallor at the prospect of confronting his victim.

"He's safe under lock and key," said Hackett, recovering himself.

"Well done!" continued the other, drawing a long breath; "but why is she not here?"

"That I don't know. She's been unruly lately. She's not easily managed, Sir Charles, I tell you."

"Are you alone?" asked the other, musing and striking his boots with his whip.

"Well there ain't but two inside; but we can be private, Sir Charles, if you have any thing to say to me."

"I have much to say to you," said the baronet, "much, and that must be said quickly. Have you wine up here?"

"Well, you see, Sir Charles, it ain't much asked for up here, but we have first-rate spirits."

"Well, come on, and let me have brandy. Is he out of hearing?"

"Quite."

"How does he bear it?" said the other in a low tone, as if afraid his cold-bloodedness should be whispered to the air around.

"Well, he does abuse me a few—he's mighty quiet to-day; but I fancy he trusts to Ragg."

"Ragg!" said Sir Charles, tottering, and clinging to the railing over the pool; "he here?"

"Yes," replied Hackett gravely, "he is here, and was locked in like the other, but he escaped. It seems he always carries the tools about with him."

"That man has turned evidence; but how could he know?"

"He's an old pal of the post-boy."

"Is it then so?" groaned Sir Charles, as he waved his hand to the other to lead on, speaking to himself; "is this the sure consequence of crime—hope deferred and detection?"

And the miserable man entered the Frog's Hole, in the principal room of which were two men drinking. At a sign from Hackett they rose and went out. Martha and the negress, who had both been attending to household duties, disappeared also, by order of the master of the house, who then produced brandy and glasses.

The baronet drank off a large draught of the raw spirit, and then sat down on a chair, his arms resting on the back, his legs across as if he were still on horseback. He closed his eyes for a few moments, and then looked sternly at the landlord of the Frog's Hole.

"Hackett," said he, "twere better, perhaps, this crime had never been committed. I should have been happier. But repentance is now too late. Andrew will seek to punish as well as to recover. I can not, I will not stand a felon in the eyes of my friends. I must end what I have begun, and you must still be my instrument."

"I, Sir Charles? I think I have done enough!" exclaimed Hackett in a hurried tone.

"You have done nothing," continued the other, coldly.

"Why, I've stole the girl, I've kept her here—"

"But you have been found out, the cunning fox has been earthed," bitterly added Sir Charles; "but if the dog has escaped, the hunter is in our toils. You have the game standing at bay, and you must kill or die."

"If I kill—" began Hackett.

"Swear nothing," interrupted the baronet, "but listen."

"I listen."

"Who told you to steal my cousin's child, Mr. Hackett?" asked he, looking the other coolly in the face.

"Why, you did," said Hackett wildly.

"Did I? Pray, did I give you any written order?"

"No; but you came to me, and asked me to join you."

"Where are your witnesses?" sarcastically inquired the baronet.

"Why, the post-boy—" said the bewildered highwayman.

"The witnesses are yourself and another highwayman," persevered Sir Charles, with a biting tone of irony, which he allowed himself the more readily that he played all the time with the handle of his pistol.

"But you were with us!" shrieked Hackett, tearing his hair with impotent rage.

"Was I indeed? Why, Master Hackett, I have a dozen witnesses to prove that I never left my room for a fortnight—Mrs. Brown, my housekeeper, who knew to the contrary in dead!"

Hackett groaned and wrung his hands. The educated villain had taken precautions of which he had never thought.

"And pray, Sir Charles, what does all this mean?" asked Hackett.

"That I have a great mind," said Sir Charles, raising his pistol to a level with Hackett's head, "to drag you to my cousin's room, reveal to him all your rascalities, and hand you over to his mercy. We should have no difficulty in getting you to England, and I will undertake to find Kate."

"But what am I to do?" groaned Hackett.

"You see, my good fellow, that either you or Andrew must be got out of the way. If you like to

hang, I will undertake to be reconciled to him; but if you wish to live, the young girl knows nothing."

"Nothing," repeated Hackett, mechanically, at the same time draining off a goblet of rum.

"Then, if you wish to live, and keep the girl and the annuity, why, you know the alternative."

The baronet spoke coldly and distinctly, as if it were the most ordinary matter of business. This, however, was merely an assumed ease, to crush the resistance of Hackett. His heart beat all the time tumultuously, and it was with difficulty that he kept the pistol in his hand from shaking.

"If it must be, it must be," said Hackett, with a shiver.

"And how do you propose to do it?" asked the baronet, coldly.

"Well," said Hackett, fixing his eyes doggedly on the ground, "the game's up in this part of the world,—so I tell you what, Sir Charles—I'll just take what few things I want, and then I'll fire the place. There will be plenty of time for the others to escape, *but he can't*."

"Well, Mr. Hackett," continued Sir Charles, "when you try your hand at arson, perhaps you'll give me fair notice."

"I will," said the other.

"But I hope you will do it properly—I suppose it will be your first appearance as an incendiary?"

"No!" said Hackett, wildly, and in choking accents, "it will not—but that matters little to you, Sir Charles."

"Not a bit, my fine fellow," replied the other; "but now show me a room where I can rest my weary limbs, and wake me at dusk."

Hackett rose and showed him to Kate's room, and as he heard him lock himself in, shook his fist at the door. He was then about to return to his seat, when the two men announced the return of the expedition, at the head of which was Simon Girty.

The supposed Ralph Regin moved toward the door, and saw the motley group of Indians and renegades, headed by Simon Girty. In their midst walked Amy and Jane Moss, scarcely able to support themselves, it is true, but endeavoring to show a resolute front to the villainous gang who had succeeded in capturing them.

"Welcome, ladies," said Hackett, *alias* Regin, affecting to consider them as travelers; "welcome to my house—it's not a first class hotel, but it is pretty comfortable."

Amy entered slowly, sweeping by the highwayman as if he had not existed, followed by Jane, who trembled and shuddered, less accustomed than her sister to the wilds. They were both dressed. They had been gagged in their room before undressing, by four men they found ready concealed there, and borne away to the woods through the wicket gate when all was still in the Moss.

"Where are we to go?" said Amy, imperiously fixing her eyes on the innkeeper.

"Well, miss, I reckon I'll show you a niceish room, anyhow," replied Regin, bowing.

He then led the way, Amy and Jane quietly following, until they reached one of the many rooms similar to that occupied by Andrew Carstone. On their road they were joined by the negress, who was introduced to the two young girls as their future attendant as long as they honored the Frog's Hole with their presence.

The room was the best of the whole number, and stood midway between those occupied by Andrew Carstone and Ragg on the night of their arrival. The girls retained their composure until they were left alone. Then they fell into each other's arms and wept.

"Oh, Amy, who has done this?" said Jane, sobbing in a way that seemed to threaten the breaking of a blood-vessel.

"I know not," cried Amy, wildly. "I have strange suspicions, but I can say nothing. We must wait my dear girl, and put our

trust in Him who alone can save us."

And by an instinctive impulse the two young girls knelt down and raised their voices aloud in earnest and heartfelt prayer.

Meanwhile Ralph Regin—we call him by the name he went by in that house—had gone back to the common room, to attend to the wants of the numerous party which had just arrived, all clamorous for drink and food. This occupied him for some time, and drowned his thoughts, which were not of a very pleasant character. However we may be hardened in crime, the prospect of a new one will always painfully affect even the most callous.

Presently the motley group of ruffians dispersed themselves over the house in search of rest, some outside even behind the wood-pile, each where his fancy took him.

Ralph and Martha were again alone. He looked at her sternly, and with some degree of hesitation, as if undecided what he should do with her. At last, however, he spoke.

"Martha," he said, "be ready by dark. Most likely we shall leave this place to-night for ever."

"Eh! vat?" exclaimed the unfortunate Dutchwoman.

"Pack up as little as possible. We shall have only two horses, and I shall have my load! Hush!"

And he turned to greet a new arrival in the shape of Squire Barton, who entered with a flushed and eager countenance.

"All is well," said Ralph Regin, quickly.

"I knew it," replied Squire Barton, hurriedly. "All is well in so far that they are here. But do they suspect any thing?"

"I can not say," answered Ralph; "I did not ask any questions."

"Ralph, no nonsense," cried Barton, impatiently; "shut that door, and let us talk. You perfectly understand me. I am supposed to come here to the rescue, and save them from Girty and his gang."

"So it was explained to me," replied Ralph; "but, Squire Barton, this is the last time you and I do business together."

"Why, pray?"

"Because before midnight I shall have left the Frog's Hole, which will be burnt down—*by accident*!"

"Ah!" said Barton, looking curiously at him; "why by accident?"

"Squire Barton, I don't do business only with you. If I tell you other people's secrets, why should I keep yours from other people?"

"There is some reason in that. Have you seen Kate lately?" he added, looking hard at Ralph.

"No! but I've seen Butler, the colonel, you know, and he says—mind the 27th June."

"Again!" shrieked Barton, exhibiting every sign of abject terror, "again that date."

"And, squire, since we are pretty thick, I must tell you Kate's father has turned up, and wants to kill every body as interferes with her."

"Indeed!" said the squire, modestly, as he remembered where he had left Kate.

"And Colonel Butler did say that Robert Jay would give you a call about that, some time," continued Ralph, who enjoyed the terrors of his fellow-criminal.

"There is no time to be lost," cried Barton, in a tremulous tone; "the time for action has come. Ralph! at eight this evening I will be ready!"

"Very good, squire."

"See that my knaves make themselves respectable by that time," said Barton, "so that Amy may not know them."

The innkeeper acquiesced, and then Barton went to a recess behind the bar, and throwing his weary frame on a couch, was soon in a sound sleep.

The shades of evening were falling, the band of desperadoes had unpainted their faces and as far as possible made themselves look like the decent retainers of a wealthy house; Ralph was eating his

supper, having got every thing ready but his gold, when an Indian came slouching into the place. He was a man of middle height, with hideous paint all over his body, streaks of varied hue, especially those which usually characterize the half-drunken conjuror. He had an ample supply of bells upon his person, that jingled as he went.

The guard outside let him pass unnoticed, but looked lazily in to see what reception he would meet with.

"Boozoo, brudder—glass whiskey!" said the Indian, in a guttural tone.

"Take it and be hanged to you," replied Regin savagely.

"Here dollah," said the Indian, with a grin.

"Oh, if you have a dollar, it's all right!" exclaimed the mollified innkeeper, holding out his hand for the coin, which he pocketed without offering change; "you'd better take a bottle, I guess."

"Me no want bottle," continued the other, in broken English, "me want drink, eat, sleep."

"Well, we're pretty full of strangers, but you can sleep outside, I guess—"

"A pretty fellow you," said Barton, advancing from behind the bar; "you expect gentlemen to put up here, and you give shelter to drunken Indians."

"Drunken Indian good as you," replied the Shawnee, with offended dignity.

Barton started, looked nervously at the Indian, and advanced nearer.

"Who are you, and whence came you?" he asked, curiously, as he surveyed his paint and features.

"Him Muskwash," said the other, moving with all the gait of a drunken man.

"Ah!" exclaimed Barton, quietly, for he knew Muskwash well, "and since when have you taken the name of Muskwash?"

"Since Muskwash, my brother, was killed by the whites."

"Mr. Custaloga," exclaimed Barton gravely, "I have long wished for this opportunity—at last I have you. Hold the door there; at the peril of your lives let none pass. Hackett, on him!"

Custaloga—for it was indeed our hero—stepped back, flourished his tomahawk, and looked about for a safe retreat.

"It is useless—you have come unto my quarters as a spy, and you must take the consequences. Why would you track me?"

"I seek Amy Moss," replied Custaloga earnestly; "give her up and I will go."

"There is no Amy Moss here," answered Barton, coldly, leveling his pistol; "but I have business here I choose not you to know. Surrender, or I fire."

"Fire!" said Custaloga, watching him with the eye of a tiger, and slowly raising his glittering ax.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FIRE!

As Barton and the Indian Custaloga, stood confronting each other, the former with his finger still on the trigger of his pistol, a dark form rushed in between them. It was the negro woman, Judy.

"Nebber!" shrieked the old negress; "nebbber, Massa James, you no kill you brudder Reginah!"

"Silence, you old hag—you lie," roared Barton, catching her by the throat. "Down with him! away with him—tie him up."

And while Custaloga was dragged away, himself overpowered by the new light in which he saw things, Barton continued to scream and shake the negress, until Regin and himself were alone with the old woman.

"What mean you, wretched old black idol?" he then said, his teeth chattering in his head.

"Ole Judy spik de trute," said the negress, sullenly.

"Out of my sight!" roared Barton, releasing her; upon which the poor old woman fled in dismay.

The traveler's door was opened several times during this scene.

"You are going to burn the house?" said Barton, hurriedly.

"I am," replied Ralph, who had watched this scene with little surprise. The secret, unknown to Barton, was known to Girty, Butler, Phoebe, Judy, and others.

"Regin," hissed Barton in his ear, clutching his arm with his two hands madly, "let him be fastened in a room as well as the father of Kate!"

"But I never said—" exclaimed Regin, with blanched cheeks.

"But I know," continued Barton, with extreme volubility, "and I say it must be done," added he, savagely.

"It shall be done," replied Regin, who began to feel the madness of crime come over him.

In a few minutes the men returned from taking Custaloga to a cell, and all began to prepare for departure.

Barton was the first who was on the move. He went out at the front door, with a select party of his men, and ascended the *alley*. The rest, with instructions to regain Scowl Hall, went down by the pool.

There remained Ralph, Martha, Judy, and Sir Charles.

Ralph and Sir Charles were deadly pale. The latter came and went hurriedly to and fro, muttering to himself, changing his mind, making it up again, and unmaking it.

The old Dutch clock of the house struck eleven. Martha and Judy were told to go down and saddle the horses.

Ralph and Sir Charles began firing the house. They placed a huge pile of furniture in the very center of the apartment with a quantity of dry fuel, and ignited it. Then they entered the long passage, and pulled down one or two logs that might have impeded the progress of the flames.

"The place is on fire!" roared Andrew Carstone, as a volume of smoke was driven by the wind up the passage, penetrating every nook and cranny.

"Fire! monsters!" repeated Custaloga, rushing with violence at his barred door.

There came no sound from the room in which the girls were confined.

"Come on," said Regin in a husky tone; "come on, Sir Charles, or I shall let them out. I have my treasure to get yet. There is plenty of time."

"On! on!" cried Sir Charles, in a menacing voice, himself returning to his room.

"Sir Charles!" exclaimed Andrew, in a tone of agony and despair, and he fell senseless on the floor of his room.

Custaloga continued frantically to batter at his door. The two fiends in human shape passed on, and the place was filled by dense columns of smoke.

When Amy and Jane Moss were placed together in one of the many rooms of the mysterious building familiarly known as the Frog's Hole, they stood motionless for some time, so overwhelmed were they by this cruel and double misfortune. They clasped each other's hands, too much overwhelmed with woe and grief to speak. The room, to which their eyes grew rapidly accustomed, was neat, provided with a bed, a table, and some chairs; the whole illumined in a dim, mysterious way from the roof. All this was taken in at a glance, and then the sisters sat down.

"Amy," said Jane, in a low whisper, creeping close to her, as if for protection, "what is the meaning of this? Are we dreaming? Is this some dreadful nightmare from which we shall presently awake?"

"No, child," replied Amy, who had from experience more courage to bear the ill-fortune that had again befallen them, having so lately passed through much that was worse; "this is, unfortunately, reality."

"Where are we?"

"I know not, and yet I suspect," replied Amy. "I have heard so

much of the Frog's Hole, that I feel persuaded this is it."

"The Frog's Hole! Why, they tried to murder Ezram Cook there," said Jane with a shudder. "They did," continued Amy, quietly; "but they will not attempt to murder us."

"Why not?" asked the terrified girl.

"We are taken from the Moss, Jane, by one who has reason to fear the future. It is to force me to become his wife that Barton has done this."

"Barton—do you think it is Barton, Amy?"

"Who else, my dear sister, could have done it?—who else could have penetrated to our chamber and gagged us while we slept? Doubt it not, Jane: we are that man's prisoners."

"But why has he done this?" exclaimed Jane, wildly.

"Jane, he must feel in his heart that Custaloga has made no vain boast, and dreading exposure, he has dragged us away."

"You think, then, that what Custaloga says may be true?"

"I do."

"I mean that Custaloga is really Reginald Morton."

"I am almost as convinced of it as of my life," replied Amy warmly.

"But he may have been deceived," continued Jane.

"Father said his features were exactly those of the parent he claimed. Besides, I saw enough of Barton's look of dread not to doubt that even he believed it."

"Then all that story of the Indians having killed them is untrue."

"Jane, if what we suspect be true, it is horrible. Barton, released from all influence at his mother's death, must have invited a band of murderers to assault the hall, slay Mr. Morton, and steal away the children."

"Horrible! Barton can never be so wicked," urged Jane.

"I doubt if Barton be not capable of anything," said Amy coldly.

"Then it is quite possible," said Jane, hiding her face, "that if what Custaloga says be true, Harvey may be his brother."

"From his story I should think it most probable. Simon Girty is known to have been present at the attack on the Block; he must have saved one child at least—who saved the other we shall know in time."

"'Tis very strange," said Jane, "that I never could think Custaloga quite an Indian."

"I did," replied Amy; "but I thought him a noble fellow for an Indian."

"Did you know he loved you before?" asked Jane, with a blush.

"I always knew it," said her elder sister with a strange smile.

"Since you knew Barton?"

"Of course. When I first knew Barton I was a child, and I received his addresses and accepted his hand out of pride—it was not many months, however, before I began to understand his character and to appreciate the silent affection of Custa. You recollect I gave up teaching him."

"I know you did; you handed him over to me; I could never understand it before," said Jane, quite startled.

"I began to feel that, considering my position, I had no right to be on such intimate terms with any one. I am sorry for the pain I gave him."

"You were always very unkind to poor Custa," said Jane gently, "very unkind."

"How could I be otherwise? was an affianced bride, and he was an Indian. Had I been free, I could not have accepted his affections."

"I know it," repeated Jane, "I know it—and yet 'tis a weak and silly prejudice. Why is not a good Indian as good as—?"

"That would take us too long to argue, dear girl. We must think now, not of the past, but of the future. It is a terrible one. As for our imprisonment here, I care not. We are here for ransom or for sale. If for ransom, our dear

father will soon rescue us; if for sale, 'tis to Barton, and I shall know how to deal with him."

"What a strange place!" said Jane, gazing around at the walls of their prison.

"Strange indeed. Many an evil deed, I fear, has been done in this Frog's Hole. Jane, dear, do you not notice a strong smell of burning?" exclaimed Amy, starting up.

"Yes, it rushes through the chinks in the door," replied Jane, wildly; "the room is filling with smoke."

"What is to be done?" said Amy, pressing her sister to her heart; "the place is on fire!"

They stood for an instant utterly overwhelmed with horror and surprise, and then clasping each other round the neck, began to weep bitterly.

"Can nothing be done?" said the sobbing Jane, gently disengaging herself.

"I will knock; perhaps they may hear us," replied Amy, taking up a piece of wood and striking the door with violence.

No answer came, and yet the smoke became thick and oppressive, curling in dense clouds over their heads, and exhibiting every sign of entirely filling the place.

"We shall be stifled," cried Jane wildly, "the smoke is thicker!"

At this moment they heard the heavy footsteps of a man passing, while cries began to resound from various parts of the great cave.

"Help! the place is on fire," said Amy, as the man passed the door.

He did not even deign to answer. A horrible suspicion flashed across the minds of the two girls, and as they felt its full force they fell on their knees.

"Jane," cried Amy, inexpressibly shocked, "Jane, love, this is dreadful! I fear we are left here on purpose."

"It can not be—no—they are not so cruel," shrieked Jane, who began to lose the ordinary calmness of judgment which characterized her.

Still the smoke flooded onward, and they could hear the crackling sounds of the fire.

"Let us pray, Jane; it is our only hope," said the elder sister in a tone of agony. "Man has abandoned us—we must trust wholly to God."

"My sister, we can open that door—'tis hard to die thus," exclaimed Jane, who rose hurriedly to her feet.

"Jane, my dear love, do not deceive yourself. Escape is impossible, unless aid soon comes from without. Let us hope to the last, dear girl; but while we hope, let us also fear and pray."

And she gently drew her sister to her side, and raised her rich and musical voice in prayer to Him in whom alone she now put her trust. It was a beautiful and touching picture—one of those scenes which are known only to the Christian, for in him alone is the faith and the belief that could utter a distinct prayer in such a time as this.

And still the smoke and heat increased.

"Hark!" suddenly exclaimed Amy, rising. "Hark! footsteps approach."

"Help! help!" shouted Jane.

A hand was heard upon the door, its bolts were unfastened, and it flew open.

The flames burst quickly over every part of the front of the building known as the Frog's Hole—so long the theater of many a plot and crime—and now the prison of Amy and Jane Moss, and of Custaloga and Andrew Carstone.

There was no time to be lost, and Hackett knew this well. His wish was to collect his gold and escape without caring for any one else, quite satisfied that he should be able to find Kate wherever she might be concealed.

The smoke of the fire spread on all sides, and, as we have said, invaded the cells. Amy and Jane began to cry aloud for assistance, and Custaloga raged like a wild

beast, though so choked was his voice that he was not recognized by the other listeners.

Andrew Carstone struck the panels of his door violently with the hilt of his sword, and also cried aloud that the place was on fire.

Hackett pursued his way toward his secret treasure without vouchsafing an answer to any of their cries; Barton had disappeared; and Sir Charles Carstone waited, pale and haggard, in the kitchen the progress of events. The party of ruffians who had brought in Amy and Jane were not to be seen. They were outside the Hole, waiting the orders of their employe.

Suddenly Barton entered the place, followed by several of his more decent-looking retainers, passed through the kitchen, which was also beginning to fill with smoke, and rushed along the passage. He threw open the door of the cell in which the sisters had been placed, caught them both by the hand, and hurried them along, regardless of their piercing cries to save others who were in equal danger with themselves.

"There are plenty to save them—come away, or the Indians will be on us," said Barton, sternly.

"Squire Barton!" exclaimed Amy, retreating from him, and pulling her hand away violently as they entered the kitchen.

"You are surprised," said the squire, bitterly: "you expected it was another. I am allowed no merit—not even that of humble devotion to you and your family."

"You know best, James Barton," replied Amy, while Jane examined him with suspicion; "you know best why I have reason to doubt you."

"I know," said Barton humbly; "I know that you have every right to find fault; but I hope to be forgiven yet."

"Take me home, squire!" exclaimed Amy, coldly; "take me from this place—to which I have every reason to believe you brought me."

"I knew not even you were here," cried the squire of Scowl Hall, furiously. "I heard that knave Simon Girty had been seen carrying you up here, and I collected a few of my men to rescue you."

"You know best the truth," said Amy, still coldly and doubtfully.

Barton made no reply, but for reasons of his own hurried them eagerly away from the Frog's Hole to the smoking horses that awaited them outside, on which they all mounted, the whole party at once making off in the direction of the Moss.

Sir Charles Carstone now came from the small bar, where he had stood all this while unperceived, and with a grim smile upon his face as he saw that others were making that place a field of crime as well as himself, crossed the kitchen to the bedroom he had recently occupied. There he remained a quarter of an hour, and waited for Hackett. At the end of that time, the fire making approaches toward that part of the house, he sallied forth hurriedly, beginning to have strange misgivings about the highwayman, and ran against a new party of men.

"Hollo!" said he, starting back with the violence of the collision.

"Where is Custaloga?" said Harvey in a husky, menacing tone.

"Who do you mean?" replied Sir Charles, recovering himself. "I have but just left my bedroom."

"But saw you not an Indian come here?" continued Harvey impatiently, while Charles and Harrod stood menacingly beside him.

"Gentlemen," said Sir Charles quietly, "I am a total stranger here; but if you will calm yourselves, I will tell you all I know."

"Speak quickly then!" exclaimed Harvey, whose impetuosity knew no bounds.

"In the first place, two young ladies were brought here last night," he began.

"Go on!" cried Harvey, impatiently clutching his rifle.

"And were placed in one of the inner rooms," continued Sir Charles.

"Which?" shrieked Harvey, preparing to dash into the flames.

"From which they were this morning removed by one Squire Barton and a party of hunters."

"Ah! how long since?" roared Charles Moss, clutching his rifle nervously.

"About a quarter of an hour," continued Sir Charles coolly.

"They went on horseback?" said Charles sadly.

"Yes."

"That was the party that woke me," exclaimed the young man sadly; "and ere I was up they were lost in the wood."

"But the Indian—"

"Well, an Indian did come, and after some talk was seized by some one, I know not whom, and dragged into the interior of this place."

Harvey heard no more, but plunged up the steps into the very thick of the flames.

"Custa! Custa!" he cried passionately, "speak to me! speak!"

"Here, quick!" said a faint voice up the passage. The corridor was narrow, flames burst out from its left-hand side, the smoke was dense and choking, and yet Harvey knew nothing nor felt nothing of it. On he bounded with fury until the sound directed him to the door. Suddenly he struck against a man.

"Ah!" he cried, "who is this?"

"For rite," growled a thick voice; "jist lift the bar, and he's safe as ninepence—it ain't werry bad yet."

And Corney Ragg brushed past him without another word.

Harvey opened the door hurriedly, and, as it proved, just in time, for Custaloga was in a small room, and was nearly choked with the heat and smoke. Clasp- ing him by the hand, Harvey drew him along the passage, and in a few minutes more, fainting and weak, Custaloga was in the open air, Harrod and Harvey being alone with him.

Charles had disappeared, having taken the first horse he could find, and darted on the track of the fugitives.

He noticed with surprise that, after riding half an hour, the horse- men who accompanied Amy and Jane Moss had turned into the track which led toward the Block-house. Charles felt surprised and amazed. The stranger, whom he recollected as having been at the Moss on a former occasion, had said that the girls had been rescued from one Simon Girty by Squire James Barton.

Were, then, all their suspicions with regard to the proprietor of Scowl Hall so unjust, as this line of proceeding indicated? While he and his friends had been out- lying in the woods on the look- out for the young girls, the man who had been so suspected and doubted by them all had effected the rescue of his two sisters, and was bearing them in triumph to their home.

Charles mused much on all this as he rode along, and it was with great difficulty that he could reconcile the strange character of the events which had occurred during the past few days.

Suddenly, as he urged his horse to the utmost speed, he heard before him the slow movement of a cavalcade, and, hurrying on, soon had the satisfaction of beholding Amy and Jane riding along side by side in quiet conversation, while Barton and one or two armed men brought up the rear.

"Stop!" shouted Charles, in a loud voice.

Barton turned round, and, recognizing the young man, as well as the road he was coming, turned very pale. But he now played too deep a game to hesitate a moment. He halted the brother of the young girls with extreme cordiality, and halted his party while he came up.

"My dear sisters," cried Charles,

riding impetuously past Barton, "whence came you?"

"From the Frog's Hole," replied Amy, "where we were taken by Simon Girty."

"Am I to understand, dear girls, that you owe your release to Squire Barton?" continued the young man, who was shaking hands with both, heartily.

"It appears so," said Amy, quietly, and without emphasis.

"Charles Moss," exclaimed Barton, in the tone of a deeply-injured man, "you would scarcely need to ask the question had not your mind been poisoned against me by those mad youths, Custaloga and Harvey, whose brains have been turned by some prating old woman."

"Barton," said Charles, frankly, "I must confess your kind conduct to-day in hurrying up to save my sisters does shake me much in my preconceived ideas. But why did you not save Custaloga also from that miscreant Girty?"

"Was Custaloga there?" asked Amy Moss, quickly, at the same time glancing at Barton.

"I knew it not," replied Barton, quietly. "My first thought was to get free from Girty and his gang. But there are plenty of others there to save. Custa is in no danger."

There was a moment of silence, after which Barton, leaving the sisters to talk with their brother, rode on first. The party behind were in great perplexity. Their doubts and difficulties appeared to increase rather than to diminish. Barton was so positive, so cool, so self-possessed, at the same time that all were thrown into doubt and perplexity. Amy Moss was very pale and anxious in her manner. She was staggered, indeed, by the cool manner of the hypocrite. It appeared to her too great a refinement of cruelty on the part of the squire to be possible. To steal her away, with the theatrical object of bringing her back, seemed too much like a scene in a play.

"Is Custa safe, think you?" asked she, suddenly, of her brother.

"I believe he is quite safe," replied Charles. "I left him in good hands."

"Then let us only rejoice at our being once more on the way home, and put our trust in Providence to unravel the future," she cried.

"You are right, Amy," said Jane, warmly; "it is much to be snatched from the burning, and we should be thankful for our escape. On to father!"

And the high-spirited girl, the tone of her mind quite restored by a short ride in the open air, spurred her horse and darted along the road until she came side by side with Barton.

"Thank you, Miss Jane," he said, warmly; "all do not desert me."

"Well, squire," replied Jane, who, in reality, had been carried further forward than she intended, "I have to thank you for restoring us to our home—see, the Moss is in sight. How delighted father will be!"

Amy and Charles came dashing up at this moment at full speed; but Barton, determined to be the first to announce the state of affairs, gave spurs to his powerful animal, and in a few minutes more was shouting aloud under the stockade.

A moment more, and the judge, pale and somewhat wild-looking about the eyes, as if his reason was somewhat weakened by this last blow, came rushing out.

"What is it, Barton?" he cried aloud, in almost frantic tones.

"I have brought back your children," replied the squire, gently.

"Have you, squire?" said William Moss, doubtingly; "if it be so then name your day. The sooner Amy is your wife the better."

"Do you want to get rid of me so soon?" exclaimed the young girl, leaping off her horse, while Barton gazed at the father in unfeigned astonishment.

"No, my child; but when you have a husband to guard you,

these scenes will not occur. Come in, children."

No more was said that evening on the question; but Barton, who, as the next day passed, appeared much relieved, pressed the matter strongly then. Judge Moss, after some hesitation, appealed to his daughter, who asked three days to consider.

At the end of three days, in the evening, Amy came in from the room where she had been walking alone. All the rest were seated at tea.

"Father," said she, solemnly, "I have thought over the matter. I will be ready on the 28th, if the bridegroom be also ready."

All started. The judge looked surprised. Barton's lip curled a little; but Charles and Jane turned very pale.

Amy Moss had consented to marry James Barton of Scowl Hall.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"ORR RITE."

MEANWHILE a very serious tragedy was being enacted at the Frog's Hole, to which we return for the last time. Corney Ragg had descended by the secret way, which appeared to be known to none save the master of the house. He had for some time felt the burning smoke that rushed up the kind of shaft in the hill, and unable to moderate his impatience, he had descended by the ladder from the platform above to the platform which stood before the door of Ralph Regin's treasury. There he was startled to find the door open, and that worthy coolly packing up his ill-gotten treasure.

An idea suddenly entered the mind of Cornelius Ragg, which made him look uglier than usual. He absolutely grinned with delight and cupidity. He appeared now intuitively to guess at the object with which the fire had been allowed to gain upon the damp and green logs, and to realize the idea that the flames were the work of an incendiary.

"Orr rite," muttered he to himself; "tit for tat, old boy."

And he quietly descended the stairs, and after giving the advice already alluded to, to Harvey, who was dashing along in search of Custaloga, he found the door of the room in which Andrew Carstone was confined. He opened it with ease, it being simply fastened by a bar on the outside.

"Eh, master!" he cried as he rushed in, surprised to hear no sound.

No answer came to his call.

"Eh! Master Carstone—it's orr rite—it's Ragg—git up."

He received no answer to this appeal any more than to the other, and feeling about soon found Andrew Carstone extended insensible on the bed.

"Orr rite," he said, snatching up the form of the merchant, who was half suffocated by the smoke of the green wood of which Frog's Hole was principally built—"kim along!"

And with these words he darted out of the room just as the flames began to crackle and burst forth with an energy which showed how wise he had been to lose no time. All retreat by the way Harvey had taken Custaloga was now impossible. This he saw at a glance, and yet the weight of the man he carried was such that it appeared equally impossible to ascend the stone steps on the inside with such a burden.

Corney Ragg, however, was not easily intimidated. He roused all his energies, and they were not a few, to meet his task, and muttering consolatory words to himself, he gained the foot of the stairs, up which the smoke was now rushing with rapidity.

"Leave me, save yourself!" muttered Andrew Carstone in a choked voice.

"Orr rite," replied that worthy, coolly ascending the stairs.

"My brain is bursting," continued Andrew; "where am I?"

"Never you mind," said Corney

philosophically; "but just shut your mouth, or you'll swallow more smoke nor is pleasant."

Corney had reached the first platform, and had his reasons for allowing no sound to reach the man who was still slowly and deliberately making up his packages in the treasure-room.

He had cast Mr. Carstone on his back, where he held him with one hand. He had but one to ascend the ladder with. It was impossible. Corney cast a glance at the stooping villain, and let Mr. Carstone slide slowly to the ground. Then he fastened his arms round his neck, and succeeded in making him clasp them. His hands were now both free, and he commenced a cautious and slow ascent of the ladder. Several times Carstone appeared about to let go: but at last, after some unexampled efforts, Ragg let him fall on the upper platform, whence he soon dragged him into the open air, and laid him down on a soft, turfy, open space surrounded by trees, with a stream of balmy air above his head.

He then left him and returned to the upper platform of the shaft.

Arrived there, he deliberately drew up the ladder and passed it out of the cave. It must be recollected here what Cornelius Ragg was, what his education and usual associates had been.

Having drawn up the ladder, he sat himself down on the edge of the platform. Above him was an aperture that lighted the whole shaft, and through this the smoke whirled, leaving the upper platform nearly free from smoke altogether.

"Hackett!" said Corney Ragg, suddenly, in a deep, hollow voice.

The man started violently, looked around, stood up, and waited.

"Hackett!" repeated Corney.

The man bounded into the platform and slammed the door behind him. He uttered a savage cry as he saw how the fire had increased below. He then looked up, and shuddered as he saw Cornelius Ragg sitting on the upper ledge of the platform.

"What do you want?" said he, in a husky tone, listening at the same time for sounds from below.

"I wanted my master, and I got him," replied Ragg, laughingly.

"Is Mister Carstone free?" said Hackett, with a shudder, and he muttered, in a low tone, "What will Sir Charles say?"

"Oh, orr rite," continued Ragg. "Sir Charles was in the secret. Pays well, eh?"

"What mean you?" said Hackett, sullenly; "get out of my way while I get up out of this place; it's getting too hot."

"Orr rite; but ver's yer ladder?" grinned Ragg. "I thinks as how you're freed, my boy."

Hackett felt with his hands, and discovering the truth, gave a yell of terror and fury which made Ragg start and shudder.

"Give me the ladder!" said Hackett wildly, "give me the ladder!"

"It's orr rite," replied Ragg, coldly; "I've the judge and jury, old fellow. You knows the law better nor I do—you are a murderer and a thief, and you must die."

"Die!" said the ruffian, with a roar, as the idea of death, and in one of its worst forms, was realized to him. "Die! I can not, I will not die!"

"They all says that," exclaimed Ragg, with supreme contempt; "you ain't harf a chap."

"Ragg," said the highwayman, in a slow, deliberate, and somewhat supplicating voice, passing his hand across his hot and fevered brow; "I never did you any harm—let me get up—I'll split on Sir Charles if you will—you'll want me to prove who Kate is."

"No ve don't—no ve von't," said Ragg, coldly.

"Well, what do you want of me?" screamed Hackett, wildly, gaining new terrors from the other's cold and deliberate manner.

"Nuffin," quickly replied Ragg.

"All I wants is the fun."

"You are not such a monster, Ragg," shrieked the wretched creature, who began to see the flames he had himself illumined advancing slowly and steadily toward him.

"Does yer value yer life werry much?" said Ragg, with a sneer.

"Of course I do," replied Hackett, for a moment filled with hope.

"Then yer wouldn't mind paying a good round sum for it, eh?"

"Where am I to get it?" said the highwayman, in a faltering voice.

"Now none of your nonsense," exclaimed Ragg, contemptuously.

"What do you mean?" asked Hackett, half defiantly. He could not give up his money.

"Now, Hackett, you've been a werry bad man; you've tried to murder my master—you've been paid for it—vell, you give up your money, and make me sure you ain't got ne'er a penny, and I'll give you the ladder."

"Monster! would you leave me to starve?" shrieked Hackett, wildly.

He was about to die by fire, and he could think of starvation.

"Vich is best, old fellow," jeered Ragg, "to be roasted or to vork honestly for a living?"

"Take half," cried Hackett, wildly, as the flames advanced with a crackle and a roar that were perfectly awful.

"All or nuffin," said Ragg, quietly preparing to go.

"Leave me a little—only a little," replied the highwayman, frantically.

"All or nuffin," repeated Ragg, who saw in the treasure of Hackett a snug little competency for himself, and who could not but feel that the robber, murderer, and assassin could not be too severely punished.

He was no more cruel than the law, but he made himself the law, and no human society can allow this.

"Take it, monster!" said Hackett, wildly, as the flames were carried close to him by a violent puff of wind.

"Orr rite," replied Ragg, grinning, and reaching his hand toward the ladder.

Hackett held up a small valise, tightly fastened. Ragg had seen him put the money in it. He stooped over and clutched it in his hand. It was as much as he could do to reach it. He, however, did succeed, and having deposited it in a safe place, he handed the ladder down to the highwayman. Immediately he had done this he hurried out into the open air.

Mr. Andrew Carstone was sitting upon the grass, pretty well recovered.

"Well, Ragg," he said, warmly, "I owe this to you. What have you in your hand?"

"Orr rite, sir," replied Ragg, looking to his pistols, "it's Hackett's price for saving him. He left you to burn on purpose."

"Why?" asked Andrew Carstone, wildly.

"Cos Sir Charles paid him to do it," replied Ragg.

"Sir Charles?" said Andrew, bounding to his feet; "where is he?"

"Round in the inn," continued Ragg, who held the valise in one hand and played with a pistol in the other, as Hackett came out of the cave, pale, tottering, and bursting with rage.

"Thief!" he cried, "give me back my money, my property."

"Hackett," said Carstone, hoarsely, "you have robbed me of my child, you received the wages of sin and guilt, and you leagued with my cousin to murder me. Go! be satisfied that your life is spared."

"Mr. Carstone," said Hackett, humbly, "Sir Charles threatened to accuse me to you of the whole guilt—threatened to shoot me in the head—used all kinds of threats; the guilt is his, not mine."

"That is nothing to me—you gave this to Ragg to save your life. Aid me to recover my child, and I will reward you."

"Follow me," said Hackett, gloomily.

He then led the way up the glen, and showed them, after passing through a tangled bush, a path that led downward to the Frog's Hole. They walked in silence, all anxious for the dénouement. They felt that the meeting of the cousins would be terrible.

In a few minutes they came in sight of the front of the house. This part was not yet in flames, but the heat had become intense, and all those who had been in the hut had left it, and were standing round a rude bench, on which reclined Custaloga, who had been brought to his senses with much difficulty.

Andrew Carstone laid his hand upon the hilt of his sword and felt for his pistols. A gleam of hate and rage shot across his face, as he saw Sir Charles standing up with his back turned to him. He had determined to secure his person on the double charge of arson and attempted murder.

"Surrender, villain!" he cried, impetuously rushing on.

Sir Charles turned round quickly, with a glance of horror and a pallid look which made his features appear perfectly frightful in their distortion. His eye caught a glance of Carstone and Hackett at the same time. On the face of the latter was a look of demoniacal triumph.

"Traitor!" he cried, discharging a pistol full in his face: and then away he bounded impetuously, to escape the well-merited anger of his cousin.

"Save me—I die!" cried the wretched Hackett, while all the others stood transfixed with horror.

Next minute Ragg and Andrew Carstone were on the traces of the fugitive.

Sir Charles, bewildered, confounded, amazed at the appearance of Andrew in company with Hackett, and really believing himself betrayed by his confederate, had in a moment of ungovernable rage fired a pistol which he had instinctively drawn from his waist. When he saw the man fall, his eyes seemed to fail him, and he turned to fly without looking to see where he was going.

In his blind terror, and unrestrained by any gentle angel, that so often hovers over the good and the worthy, he dashed against the railing that kept people from falling over into the pool, and fell headlong down into the water below.

The pool was deep, its waters black, and down he went headlong. Andrew Carstone gazed over in horror.

The body did not come up again. They returned hastily to where Hackett, supported by his wife and the negress, lay prostrate.

"Mr. Carstone," he said faintly, "I am dying. But I have time to say that I deeply repent the injury done you. That was your daughter I had charge of."

"Where is she?" asked Carstone.

"I know not."

"Then ask not my forgiveness," replied the merchant moodily.

"Forgive me! oh, Mr. Carstone, forgive a wretch who was bribed by worse than himself."

"My daughter!" replied the other again sternly.

"Is quite safe, and with friends who are deeply indebted to her," said Custaloga, who had now recovered sufficiently to speak; "that is, if Kate Regin, as she was called, be the girl that you are in search of."

"That is her," replied Hackett faintly.

"I forgive you, as I forgive the wretched instigator of your crime, who has preceded you to judgment," replied Andrew Carstone solemnly.

"Sir Charles dead!" shrieked Hackett wildly; "then there is a just God. Crime is always punished."

"Always," said Custaloga solemnly. "Ah! who comes?"

A horseman was distinctly heard

galloping up, and next moment a tall and powerful man ascended the steps.

"Colonel Butler!" cried Custaloga.

"Yes!" said that individual. "Come. No time is to be lost. You must ride with me. We can talk by the way. Whence comes this fire?"

Custaloga hurriedly explained, and then prepared to go.

"Leave me with the women," said Hackett faintly.

"Orr rite," replied Ragg. "I'll stop and nurse you—and blow me if I don't give yer half yer money back."

This offer being accepted, Custaloga, Harrod, Butler, Carstone, and Harvey turned away from that den of crime, and made the best of their way in the direction indicated by their leader. Custaloga undertook to call on Kate by the way.

Colonel Butler was the avenging angel who had brought discovery on Barton.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HA! HA! HA!

It was a gloomy day. The feeling in the Block was one of sadness, and undefined dread. The judge having yielded to the persuasions of Barton knew not how to retreat. He rose early and went out into the garden with Charles. His walk was uneasy, his face pale and anxious. Charles was equally sad.

"My son," said the judge, laying his hand upon his arm, "this is a terrible state of uncertainty. I have promised my child to Barton, he having restored her to me, and yet—"

"You are not satisfied, my dear sir," replied Charles, quickly; "could not we delay it for a day or two longer?"

"No! In the exuberance of my joy at her second safe return, I said 'Take her; name your own day.'"

"You did, father, and but for this strange disappearance of Custaloga, Harvey, and their friends, I should hesitate still more."

"I should hesitate but for the unaccountable calmness of Amy," said the father; "she has raised no objection, nor does Jane—'tis mysterious and puzzling. The events of the last few weeks, indeed, have utterly amazed me. I know not what to think."

"I have ridden far and near to get a trace of either Custaloga, or Harvey; but they have disappeared and left no sign. Sometimes I dread a crime."

"Charles, there is a Providence above us, and in it we must put our trust," said the father solemnly. "See, the girls are up; they nodded to me from their window."

The two gentlemen then, after kissing their hands to the girls, turned slowly toward the river, on which side the guests were expected to arrive. Barton was to come at eleven with the minister who was to officiate and pronounce the blessing on this ill-starred and ill-omened marriage.

At an early hour, two of the neatest and sprightliest of the negro attendants of the Moss entered the room of the sisters. They were already up and busily engaged in laying out the simple finery which was to adorn them on this memorable occasion.

"Many happy returns of the day!" said Rosa with a laugh, while the other girl curtsied in silence. Like all of their race, a wedding was to them a peculiar occasion for rejoicing.

"Thank you," replied Amy gravely.

"Will Miss Amy dress for breakfast now?" continued the girl.

"No; make our excuses to my father and bring us breakfast here," replied our heroine, who was provokingly calm and easy in her manner.

The attendants went out to obey these directions and left the sisters once more alone.

"How bright your eyes are, Amy," said Jane, as she looked kindly and yet strangely at her; "I never saw you look so beautiful."

"Hush, silly one! There is fever in my blood, the fever of anxiety and doubt. With all my bold resolves I begin to be very nervous."

"Dear, dear Amy; are you quite sure you know what you are about?" exclaimed Jane, leaning on her shoulder tenderly.

"Quite sure, dear Jane. I feel that I am doing but right, however strange my conduct may appear."

"How grave and sad father looked just now," mused Jane, shaking her pretty curls; "he does not think it right."

"Of course he does not. Jane, dear, trust in me. I am acting for the best: I am acting so as to insure my own happiness and the happiness of others. Wait awhile and you will understand better," added Amy.

"Dear sister, I am accustomed to hearken to your words and to believe them; but it does seem to me strange after all that has passed, that you should at last consent with so much ease to marry James Barton, simply to please father."

"But father does not wish it," said Amy with a merry smile.

"Upon my word," cried Jane, "I do begin to think you are not in your right senses to torment me thus."

"Thank you, Miss Jane Moss," said Amy with much solemnity, and an obeisance quite ludicrous; "but when did I agree to marry James Barton?"

"Why, Amy, what do you mean?" said Jane, turning quickly round.

"I ask you, Jane, when I agreed to marry James Barton?"

"Did not father fix this day, and did not you consent?"

"I said, 'Father, I will marry on the twenty-eighth, if the bridegroom be ready.'"

"Those words are plain enough to me—the bridegroom will be here directly."

"He may be here, but not ready. I fancy," continued Amy, taking up a white veil and throwing it over her luxuriant tresses. "Shall I wear a white veil?"

"Incomprehensible girl!" said Jane, somewhat relieved by her manner; "I do not understand you, but I will endeavor to be easy in my mind."

At this moment, Rosa entered with a mysterious look on her face, while her companion came behind with the breakfast-things.

"What is it?" asked Amy Moss, who was truly incomprehensible on this occasion. Nothing seemed to move or surprise her.

"A lady at the postern gate want to speak private to Miss Amy Moss," said the girl, her large eyes becoming rounder than usual from the decided mystery of the case.

"Show her in, and say not a word to any one," replied Amy.

"Who can it be?" asked Jane, who began to be bewildered more and more every moment.

"A friend," said Amy, "whom I have been expecting for some days."

"Why, Amy, who can it be?"

"Dear child, there shall be no more mystery for you now—wait until she comes in, and you shall know all."

At this moment Rosa returned, leading in a lady, closely veiled, who, as soon as she entered the apartment, uncovered her face, and looked somewhat uneasily around. She was young and lovely, but her face was careworn, pale and thin. She trembled violently, and sunk on a chair.

"Miss Amy Moss?" she said in a tone of gentle inquiry, addressing our heroine.

"Yes," replied Amy tenderly, taking her hand. "You are not well, dear madam?"

"I am weak, very weak; and the dread of this scene unnerves me."

"Pray be calm. There is no danger now—what has happened can never happen again."

"I know it—I know it—I know that I may now live in peace. But it is not so much that, as—as—a—dislike to injure him—he is still my husband!" said the trembling woman.

"Strange mysterious tie!" cried Amy. "This man has tortured your body and soul, and yet you regret being the instrument of his punishment—'tis natural, after all."

"No. I do not regret—I only dread the moment. When once I am sure 'tis over I shall be happier. I hoped never to have seen him again. He is far more wicked than I could have believed him."

"Sister Amy!" cried Jane passionately; "explain to me what all this means, or I shall go mad!"

"This is my sister Jane—and listen, Jane, this is poor Mrs. Barton, whom he pretended dead!"

Jane raised her hands, pressed them on her forehead, and sunk into a chair.

"Helen Barton!" cried Jane, "why, where, then, has she been?"

"In a dungeon under his house, where he believes her still—and to that house this monster would have taken me this night!" said Amy with a voice of horror.

"And how discovered you all this?" asked the bewildered Jane.

"Custa," said Amy, with a deep blush; "Custa has here again been our salvation."

"Ah!" cried Jane, turning pale and red by turns; "then they have not deserted us?"

"They have not," said Amy with a smile and a blush; "but come, let us have breakfast and arrange our plans."

The breakfast was laid before them. For some time the two sisters listened to the story of the injured wife with deep interest. Time, however, was going on, and it was necessary to prepare for the events of the day.

"Jane," said Amy, blushing deeply, "do you know 'tis very likely I shall be married to-day after all?"

"What mean you?" cried Jane, again bewildered.

"There will be a minister here, and 'twill be hard to make him come for nothing," added Amy in considerable confusion.

"But how is it possible?" exclaimed Jane.

"Reginald Morton will be here at twelve o'clock," continued Amy.

"Then it is all true?" cried Jane.

"Naughty Amy, why have you concealed this from me?"

"Because he wished it," said Amy solemnly; "he feared that if explanations were given to all, the just exposure and punishment of the guilty would not have been."

"When did you see him?" asked Jane, anxiously, yet timidly.

"He wrote to me, and he came here one night when you were asleep, and talked to me two hours at that window," said Amy, who was now more confused than her sister.

"Well, Amy, you have done for the best. Does Reginald come alone?"

"No, silly one; his brother comes with him, and if Amy Moss becomes the wife of Reginald, why not Jane of Walter?"

Jane hid her burning, blushing face on her sister's breast and sobbed aloud, while Mrs. James Barton, or Helen, as we may call her, looked on with a half-sad, half-gratified smile.

"Jane, dear," said Amy, caressing her hair with gentle solicitude, "if it grieves you I will say no more of it."

"It does not grieve me, sister, dear; but Richard—that is, Walter—never asked me."

"But he will ask you, and that this very day. He never dared to ask you before, because he was a poor artist; but he always did love you. A pretty state of affairs, truly. I am going to marry my pupil, and you your drawing-master."

And despite the solemnity of the occasion, Amy laughed aloud.

Meanwhile, events were occurring in the Block, to which it is necessary to return. When the fa-

ther and son received the message of the girls, intimating that they would breakfast in their own room, they went into the breakfast-room at once and sat down to their meal in somewhat solemn silence. They were both in a state of painful, nervous excitement, fearing almost they knew not what.

"Rash promises, my son," said the judge, earnestly, "are always sure to bring their own punishment."

"But, my dear sir," replied Charles, "as Amy is satisfied, what more can we ask?"

"Charles! Charles!" continued the judge, shaking his head, "there is a mystery about Amy I would gladly fathom. She raised no objection to this marriage, she consented to the day; and yet she scarce speaks to the squire when he is here, while he is constrained and forced in his manner, as if his happiness rests heavily on him. 'Tis strange, 'tis wondrous strange!"

"I really can not make Amy out," said Charles, in reply; "only last night she laughed at me, when I bade her reflect seriously. She said she had reflected, and if the bridegroom came, she would be married to-day."

"Yes, she does say the bridegroom, but she never mentions Barton. She avoids his name."

"Father! whatever is to be, for weal or woe, will soon be decided; for here is Barton and poor Clara's father, with one or two neighbors," said Charles, rising and ringing a bell violently.

The judge stifled a sigh and went out to meet his guests.

Barton was dressed with scrupulous care, and though evidently pale and agitated, looked handsomer than usual, from the intense state of excitement into which he was thrown by the circumstances of the day. He shook hands with the judge, and addressed him in such meek and humble tones, that the father was quite touched. He shook hands also with Charles; but the young man was haughty and distant.

"Welcome!" said the judge, heartily, to the grave and sad father of Clara; "'tis not often we see the face of a minister of God. My poor house is honored by your presence."

"My humble services are yours," replied the minister, gravely. "I am glad to see you, judge. You are a happy man, William Moss; you have two daughters and a son. I am alone in the world."

"No," said a timid voice beside him, "no, *grandpa!*"

The minister of the gospel quivered all over as these words came to his ears, and, turning, beheld a beautiful boy looking up in his face—a boy to whom one of the party had whispered that that was his grandfather.

"Is it so?" exclaimed the minister, deeply affected. "Is this my Clara's child? Father of mercy, I thank Thee! There is, then, something of human interest yet left for me in this world."

And moving apart with the child, he left the others to their general conversation, to give way to his deep emotions unnoticed. There is a magic in the second love of old men for their children's children, which the minister was destined to feel to the full. The bitterness of his child's death was not gone—his spirit was not chastened enough for that, good as he was; but it was counterbalanced by the unutterable joy of having near him the offspring of his beloved daughter.

There is no love so unutterably deep, so mysterious, so absorbing, as the love for a dead child's child.

The rest adjourned to the breakfast-room, and there, in general conversation, on the weather, the crops, and the Indian war, beguiled the time, aided by copious refreshments.

Barton spoke in an undertone to the judge, expressed his deep gratitude for the honor done him, protested his love for Amy, and his earnest wish to make her happy. He spoke with deep and sad feeling—his emotion was overwhelming and contagious.

"May you be happy!" cried the judge, suddenly; "I believe you deserve to be—but my child is a tender plant. Be good to her."

"I will, as I hope for mercy myself," said the squire, with an earnestness quite startling.

At this moment the minister entered, leading the child by the hand. There was a pause, and a general silence, for all felt that the critical hour was arriving.

"Judge, I thank you! This is an unexpected blessing. I heard confused accounts of my child's death. I knew not the boy was saved. But no more of this—the time advances. This is a day of sober gladness; I will not interrupt it."

"Go, ask your mistress to come to the drawing-room," said the judge gravely.

The negro girl went out. The gentlemen rose, the judge leading the way to the drawing-room, which was fitted up with considerable taste and elegance. Flowers and white curtains had been used extensively, and the effect was very pleasing.

At the same instant that the gentlemen entered at one end, the ladies, four in number, entered at the other. There was a moment of greeting, and then, had a thunderbolt fallen, none could have been more astounded.

"James Barton," said Amy Moss with flashing eyes, at the same time advancing close up to him; "you have come here to marry me this day."

"I have," replied he, rather surprised at her tone.

"And you would really go through the ceremony?" continued Amy.

"Why not?" asked Barton, while the judge stood still in silent amazement.

"Why not?" said a gentle voice near. "Why not? Am I not your wife, James Barton?"

"Helen!" roared he, his eyes starting from his head; "where came you from?"

"From the tomb, James Barton, where you buried me alive, to save this innocent girl."

All stood as if the ghosts of their ancestors were passing before them in solemn array. Never on or off the stage had a prepared surprise produced so startling an effect. It was too bewildering, too incredible, too horrible for instantaneous belief. Too many sensations were crowded upon them in one instant of time.

The general accusations against Barton burst upon the minds of all, and Judge Moss appeared for a moment as if paralyzed.

"Then there is no need for my services?" said the minister, who alone of all present could find words, and who really wished to hurry away.

"Stay, my dear sir," replied Amy, with burning blushes; "the bridegroom has not come yet."

"Orr rite," said a strange voice; "Mr. Reginald and Mr. Walter Morton."

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONCLUSION.

THE scene in that room at this moment was one to which the pen of few men could have done justice. On one side of the room, up against the wall, stood Barton—or rather leaned this man of crime and guilt—his eyeballs distended, his lips moving but not speaking, his face ghastly in its pallor, his hands held up to hide all the world, all life, all nature from him.

At the door, dressed in the garb of gentlemen of that day, stood those heretofore called Custaloga and Harvey, but now known to be the children of the same mother as Barton—Reginald and Walter Morton. They were hand-in-hand, flushed and excited, but keeping down all sign of triumph over the miserable man who had been their enemy so long.

Helen, poor victim, had fainted, and was supported by the sisters; while Kate, who with her father also entered, ran across the room to assist her.

The judge and Charles, with all the gentlemen invited to the party, stood silent, amazed, utterly unable to realize in one instant the awfully-dramatic scene which was taking place before them.

"What is the meaning of all this?" said the judge wildly.

"My dear sir," replied Reginald, taking his hand, "it means that the squire has had all his crimes discovered at the same time; and that it has been done publicly, at the wish of Colonel Butler."

"Colonel Butler," muttered Barton, looking round for a weapon. He was unarmed.

At the same instant two powerful hands were laid upon him by two men, who had crept upon him, unawares—fellows who acted with a calmness quite dreadful.

"James Barton," said one of these men, "I arrest you for the wilful murder of Mr. Morton, fifteen years ago. Here is my warrant."

A shudder went through the whole room.

"Who dares," said Barton wildly, "who dares accuse me of this foul and unnatural crime?"

"All your accomplices have confessed," said the man; "and you had best come along quietly."

"Take me away," he replied, closing his eyes. "Will no man have the heart to shoot me?"

None answered, and he was led out by the officers of justice, with out another word or another struggle.

"Reginald," said the judge, shaking him earnestly by the hand, "I thank you; you have saved my child from worse than death."

"No, he has not, papa," replied Amy, leaving Helen who was now sensible.

"What mean you, my child?" continued the judge, who was more puzzled every minute.

"I never meant to marry James Barton; I said I would be married to-day, if the bridegroom was ready. And there he is!"

"My more than father," exclaimed Reginald, taking the hand of the beautiful girl, "the minister is here, to make Amy a bride: shall he not do so?"

"But, my dear children, this is very sudden. What do I see?" exclaimed the judge, as Walter and Jane also stood before him hand-in-hand.

"Scowl Hall will not be ready for a year," said Walter with a smile; "we do not wish to leave you."

"But will any one explain to me the mystery of this day?" replied the judge. "Was all this arranged beforehand?"

"My dear father," said Amy Moss, "I alone was in the secret. Custaloga—I mean Reginald—said it was necessary, and I obeyed his orders. Blame me—blame no one else."

"I blame no one," continued the judge; "but really it is very sudden."

"My dear friend," said the minister earnestly, "this is a day of rejoicing and gladness; your lambs have been saved from the wolf. Let me make them further happy. Marriage is God's holy ordinance." "God bless you!" put in Harrod, who came in unobserved, leading his child by the hand.

The judge took his two girls on one side and spoke to them in affectionate and earnest tones. They replied to him in the same manner, and wept tears of love as they heard him.

Meanwhile, to the astonishment of all present, a further conversation of a very similar character was taking place in a corner.

"Mr. Carstone," said Charles, timidly, "I have sincerely to congratulate you on having recovered your daughter."

"Who is, Mr. Charles, all that I could have hoped. Allow me to thank you for the part you have all taken in her release from the den of that villain!" replied the merchant earnestly.

"How do you like America?" continued Charles, with a blush. "Very much," said Andrew

Carstone, fixing his eyes keenly on him.

"I wish you could persuade papa never to leave it," said Kate with a smile.

"Mr. Carstone!" said Charles impetuously, "I love your daughter—I have had more than one opportunity of judging of her character and disposition. I have thought of her ever since our first meeting. Mr. Carstone, will you send for your wife and settle with us?—America can not afford to lose so fair a daughter."

"I have already written to my wife to sell all and come here," replied the merchant with a smile.

"Dear father!" exclaimed Kate.

"Do you accept the addresses of this young man?" continued the merchant, who remembered her dear mother at the same age.

"Yes!" said Kate faintly.

"Heaven bless you!" replied Charles, taking her unresisting hand.

"Mr. Moss!" exclaimed the merchant, dryly turning to the assembled company; "have you decided the fate of your two daughters?"

"I have, sir," said the judge quickly; "I am about to give two good girls to two of the best boys on earth."

"Thank you!" exclaimed Reginald, clasping his fair one's hand.

"Judge, I can't speak," said Walter. "I'm entirely cut up. This is happiness I never could have believed. How could I have expected such a wife?"

"I'm not your wife yet," said Jane maliciously.

Walter hung down his head, and said nothing.

"Well, then, judge," continued the merchant, "here is another knotty point to settle."

"Pray what is that, sir?" asked Mr. Moss, with a good-natured smile.

"Why, here's your son wants not to be behind your daughters; so he has inveigled me out of my Kate!"

"What!" exclaimed the judge, once more amazed and puzzled.

"Yes, dear father; it is not fair that Amy and Jane should marry, and leave me forlorn and alone," replied Charles, laughing.

"But you never saw this young lady before?" said the judge.

"Oh, yes, I have," said the young man, smiling, while the whole party, despite their own private matters of interest, listened attentively.

"My dear son," said the father, much moved, "this is a very strange day. It can not be said I am about to lose any of my children—but all are about to marry. I am quite overcome. All I can say is, God bless you all!"

The joy of the whole party now knew no bounds. Such a merry marriage-day had not been known for some time. All the painful incidents of the past were forgotten for a moment, and the minister, who had been conversing seriously with Harrod, turned and intimated that he was ready.

Suddenly Helen Barton was missed.

This is what had happened:

As soon as she had quite recovered, she slipped out of the room quite unobserved, and speaking with one of the negroes, found that Barton, handcuffed and otherwise secured, was in the Block House, while his captors refreshed themselves in the kitchen. Passing rapidly across the grounds, she in a moment more confronted the marshal's officer.

"I want to see my husband for ten minutes," she said, firmly.

One of the men raised his head; the others continued eating.

"You are Mrs. Barton?" he replied, respectfully.

"I am."

"Never refused a wife in my life; I guess I won't begin now," said the officer of justice, warmly, and he rose from his seat.

"Thank you," said Helen, simply.

The man took a key, and guided by a hint from Helen, took his round at the back of the Block

until he turned the inner side of it quite unperceived.

In another moment Helen was inside the block, locked in with her husband, who sat moodily on a chair.

"James!" said she, gently.

"What want you?" he replied, raising his manacled hands. "Do you come here to insult my misery?"

"No, James—I come here to comfort and console," replied Helen, warmly.

"Can this be true?" said that man of sin to himself; "then get me a file and help me to escape."

"No, James; I cannot do that. I would if I could. But this I will do—I will follow you wherever you go—I will nurse you in prison—I will try and ease your unhappy moments, and poor Christian that I am, endeavor to lead you to repentance."

"And why all this?" asked Barton, overwhelmed with remorse and astonishment.

"Because you are my husband. Whom God hath joined let no man put asunder."

"Helen!" exclaimed that man, starting up and then falling on his knees. "If I escape with my life, if I rid myself of chains, and fly to some distant spot where I can expiate my sins in obscurity, will you—can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you, James—I will love you!" sobbed the devoted, still loving woman.

"And I have trodden this girl under foot. Go, Helen; I cannot speak more now. Let me think. The sublimity of woman's devotion is too much for me. I cannot comprehend it."

"I will not leave you," said Helen; and she sat down a little distance off.

There they found her; but no argument or reason would make her move; and about half an hour afterward she left the Moss in company with her husband.

Two nights afterward he escaped from prison, and both he and his wife disappeared.

Years after there came letters from Helen. She was happy. Barton was a quiet, hard-working farmer, who strove, by daily labor and industry, and the exercise of social duties, to expiate the crimes of his past.

And the others were married. First Charles, then Reginald, then Walter; and never did three couple appear better to merit their full cup of joy.

Reginald pulled down Scowl Hall, and erected a fine, open, clear mansion on its site. He called it Amy Hall, discarding forever the disagreeable epithet it had so long suffered under. He lived there, loved and respected by his friends and a numerous family, for all of whom he provided well out of his ample patrimony.

Walter built himself a house half-way between the Moss and Amy Hall, where he spent much of his share of the paternal estate in pictures, and continued, with his dear wife, those studies that had made them acquainted.

Charles and Mr. Andrew Carstone first began the extension of the Moss into a town, for they both built fine mansions close to it.

Mrs. Carstone—Fanny—came out, and rejoiced much when she pressed her daughter in her arms. Communication in those days was so slow; that before she came out there was another Fanny, whom she loved even more than her own lost one.

Judge Moss lived to a good old age, and saw his children and his children's children growing up around him.

Harrod made another clearing, and devoted himself to making an inheritance for his son. He ceased to be an avenger; and though he frequently was called to the field, to punish the marauding savages, he took no scalps, nor left behind him headless corpses. But he ever remained a sad, silent man, finding his chief pleasure in training his boy to emulate the virtues of his dead mother, which the child did to an eminent degree; and when the deeds of the Silent Hunter had passed into tradition, the name of Harrod was one to command admiration and respect.

Corney Ragg stopped in America. He could not leave Mr. Carstone, and hearing his wife was dead, he married, and became a farmer, and not an unsuccessful one.

Hackett and Spiky Jonas both lived and disappeared somewhere out West, and were heard of no more.

No one was more happy than Amy, and, as she always called him, dear Custa.

THE END.

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